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THE SCOTCH PREACHER:

OR,

A Collection of SERMONS.

VOL. III.

THE

SCOTCH PREACHER:

OR,

A Collection of SERMONS,

By ſome of the moſt eminent CLERGYMEN of the Church of SCOTLAND.

VOL. III.

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SERMON I.

Family-Worſhip recommended.

By ANDREW HUNTER, D. D.

Jos. xxiv. 15.

As for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.

THESE words are part of a ſolemn addreſs to God's ancient people Iſrael, delivered by Joſhua at the cloſe of an active and uſeful life; and could not fail to command attention, as they proceeded from one no leſs venerable for age, wiſdom, and experience, than for his unſhaken integrity, high rank, and illuſtrious deeds. Verſ. 14. "Now "therefore fear the Lord, and ſerve him in "ſincerity and truth, and put away the "gods which your fathers ſerved on the o-"ther ſide of the flood, and in Egypt; and "ſerve ye the Lord. And if it ſeem evil "unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this "day whom you will ſerve, whether the gods "whom your fathers ſerved that were on the "other ſide of the flood, [viz. Jordan], or "the gods of the Amorites, in whoſe land "ye dwell." Then he adds his own fixed determination: "But as for me and my houſe,

" we will ſerve the Lord ;" that is, I am reſolved to be religious myſelf to the end of life, and to recommend the ſervice of God to my relations, and all under my roof, by my advice, example, and influence : I am determined to check impiety and licentiouſneſs, and to uſe my beſt endeavours that all my family join me in the worſhip and obedience of the living God. Such is the purport of the reſolution of this worthy general.

Imagine not, however, that Joſhua thought it entirely in his own power, or in the power of any maſter of a family, to make all thoſe who dwell in his houſe ſincerely pious and holy. Many, after their beſt endeavours, have had melancholy experience of the contrary. To change the heart, is the work of God. But Joſhua was reſolved, that nothing ſhould be wanting on his part to promote the ſpiritual welfare of all in his houſe ; and truſted, that the divine bleſſing would render his endeavours ſucceſsful. It is not unlikely, indeed, that the domeſtics of this good man were piouſly diſpoſed, like himſelf ; and that, from his knowledge of their character, he might venture to promiſe on their faithful adherence to the duties of religion : " As for me and " my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord."

Various are the methods by which the head of a family may promote the religious intereſts of thoſe under his roof ; by inſtructing them in the principles and duties of religion, joining with them daily in the exerciſes of devo-

tion,

tion, frequent catechiſing of younger perſons, admoniſhing and reproving the thoughtleſs and vitious, and finally exhibiting in his own life an amiable repreſentation of religion, a bright pattern of every Chriſtian virtue.

To no cauſe can the preſent declining ſtate of piety, and growing licentiouſneſs of manners, be more juſtly attributed, than to the great neglect of family-religion. Were heads of families at due pains to perform the important duties now ſuggeſted, we might with reaſon indulge the pleaſing hope, that our Zion would yet flouriſh, "that righteouſneſs "would run down our ſtreets as a ſtream, "and judgement like a mighty current." To thoſe therefore in this aſſembly who are placed in that character or relation of life, would I now addreſs myſelf; and gladly would I perſuade them to adopt and effectuate the reſolution of the victorious leader of Iſrael, "As for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the "Lord."

The particular branch of family-religion which I propoſe to recommend at preſent, is family-worſhip: A very important duty; and which I am perſuaded there is at this time the greateſt need to inculcate; for there never was a period in which it was more generally neglected. Every attentive reader of the context will diſcover, that ſerving the Lord means here, paying worſhip or homage to him, as expreſſed by adoration, thankſgiving, and ſupplication; for it is put in oppoſition to the

neglect of religious worſhip, or groſs miſtakes as to the object of it.

It ſhall be my endeavour, in dependence on divine grace, 1. to point out and enforce the obligations to the daily practice of family-worſhip; 2. To examine and refute apologies for the neglect of it; and conclude with an application ſuitable to my ſubject.

I. Attend then to the reaſonableneſs of this duty. It is hardly needful to obſerve, that the difference between family-worſhip and the other ſpecies of devotion, viz. ſecret and public worſhip, is, that the former is the act of a family, and ſhould have a reference to the ſtate of it at the time; the latter are the acts of an individual, or of a large ſociety, and ſhould likewiſe have a reſpect to their particular circumſtances. Now what can be more fit, than that a family ſhould unite in the worſhip of the living God? In whatever point of view we conſider it, this will appear to be a reaſonable ſervice. Every argument that can be propoſed with reſpect to the obligations of prayer in general, might be urged with ſtrength in ſupport of this branch of it; but we ſhall confine ourſelves to thoſe which are more ſtrictly connected with this duty.

1. The ſupreme Being is the *founder of families*, and therefore ſhould be acknowledged by them as ſuch.

It is a clear principle of reaſon, That God ſhould

ſhould be acknowledged by his rational creatures in every relation in which his providence hath placed them. Now, if this is unqueſtionably one of the moſt important relations of life, it is obviouſly fit, that thoſe who are placed in it ſhould frequently join in a correſpondent act of homage to him who "ſettleth "the bounds of their habitations." If ſecret prayer is our duty as individuals, if public worſhip is binding on men as members of a community; family-worſhip is as much obligatory on us as members of families; for what are families but ſmaller ſocieties? It is God who is the eſtabliſher of houſeholds; it is he who formed for man a help meet for him, and who appointed the ſacred bond of marriage for the mutual comfort of both parties, and for the continuing of a ſeed to ſerve him. It is the Almighty who "placeth the "ſolitary in families; children are his heri-"tage, and the fruit of the womb his re-"ward." He is the father of all the families of the earth; his providence continually preſides over their reſpective intereſts, and directs every event that befals them. "A ſon "honoureth his father, and a ſervant his "maſter." The ſubordination of nature and of ſociety requires it. Should not then our heavenly Parent and Maſter receive the homage of every family of reaſonable beings, ſeeing he is inveſted with theſe characters in a much higher degree than they ever obtain among men?

2. If we take a view of the ſtate of families, we will ſee the peculiar reaſonableneſs and propriety of this duty.

Hath not every family many ſins to confeſs before God? Is not every member chargeable with adding to the guilt of their ſmall ſociety, by innumerable omiſſions and violations of duty? Are not many families apt to exceed in the uſe of the lawful comforts of life, or deficient in gratitude to the beneficent author of them? Are not the heads of many families chargeable with idleneſs, inactivity, and prodigality, on the one hand, or with immoderate ſolicitude and parſimony, on the other, in the management of their ſecular affairs? Do not many children give early indications of perverſe tempers, and a ſtrong tendency to do what they are forbidden? Are they not often guilty of acts of undutifulneſs to their parents, of lying, the contempt of good advice and reproof, abuſe of the means of their education, the diſregard or neglect of things ſacred? Do not ſervants increaſe much the guilt of families, both by frequent inattention to religious obligations, and the defective performance of the duties of their ſtation? Is it not then highly proper that family-ſins, whether of a more or leſs aggravated kind, ſhould be acknowledged before God in frequent and united acts of humble confeſſion? May not judgements, inſtead of bleſſings, be expected by thoſe whoſe tranſgreſſions are not confeſſ-

ed

ed with contrition, and whoſe hearts are hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin?

Further, the reaſonableneſs of family devotion appears from the many favours we are daily receiving from the hand of God. It is he who gives us food and raiment, comfortable lodging, and refreſhing ſleep; it is he who protects us from innumerable dangers, who reſtores the ſick to health, and continues us in the exerciſe of our rational powers; it is he who proſpers induſtry, and crowns our honeſt undertakings with ſucceſs. To his good providence we are indebted for being born in a land of liberty, and enjoying, in purity and plenty, the light and ordinances of the goſpel. Theſe and other bleſſings are ſcattered with a more liberal hand upon ſome families than on others; but there is none which doth not receive various proofs of the divine benignity. Should not theſe be devoutly acknowledged? Would not an indigent family, who derived their ſupport from ſome generous benefactor, be juſtly deemed moſt ungrateful and unworthy, if the different members, or the head of it, as the mouth of the reſt, did not expreſs a warm ſenſe of ſuch obligations? Is it not then unqueſtionably fit and reaſonable, that a daily ſacrifice of thankſgiving and praiſe ſhould be offered up by Chriſtian families to that almighty and gracious being, on whom they continually depend, and from whom they receive every enjoyment.

Again, as we have many bleſſings to aſk from

God,

God, for ourſelves, and thoſe with whom we are connected, it is evidently proper to pour forth united ſupplications to the Hearer of prayer, and Father of mercies. We ſhould daily implore the forgiveneſs of thoſe ſins of which every member of the family hath been guilty, and aſk thoſe ſupplies of grace which are ſuited to our different circumſtances and occaſions. When we conſider to what duties we are called, and to what trials we are expoſed, in this probationary ſtate, how needful does it appear for the head of a family to ſupplicate, in behalf of himſelf, and thoſe under his roof, ſtrength to reſiſt temptations to intemperance, unlawful gain, or any forbidden pleaſure; knowledge, prudence, and activity, for the diſcharge of their reſpective duties; ſucceſs to their different ſtudies and worldly purſuits; patience and fortitude of mind under the afflictions and diſappointments of life? How proper is it to pray, that ungodly relations, children, or other domeſtics, may undergo a ſaving change of nature; and that thoſe who are religiouſly diſpoſed may go on, with increaſing ſtrength, in the ways of piety and holineſs? As the circumſtances of families are various, the petitions of thoſe who preſide in theſe united acts of devotion, ſhould correſpond to their different emergencies and ſituations.

How can you reaſonably expect the bleſſings of which you ſtand in need, if you are not at the pains to aſk them? Did you know

of

of a perſon who could give you a cure for any loathſome and dangerous diſeaſe, to which your families were liable, would you not apply for it with the moſt ſolicitous importunity? and can any family who are ſenſible of their preſent guilty and needy condition, heſitate a moment about joining with frequency and united ardour in imploring bleſſings much more important, and which, we are aſſured, the great object of prayer is both able and willing to beſtow on every ſincere ſuppliant? for if earthly parents, "being evil, "know how to give good gifts unto their "children, how much more ſhall our Father "who is in heaven give good things to them "that aſk him?"

Be perſuaded, then, to be regular in your family-devotions. It is a reaſonable and becoming ſervice. Even the Heathen nations appear to have been ſenſible of the reaſonableneſs of this duty. Though their notions concerning the Deity were very erroneous, and their worſhip groſsly faulty; yet they preſented their homage in a relative or family-capacity as well as individuals. They had their *penates*, or houſehold gods, to whom families addreſſed their devotions. Such ſeems to have been the teraphim, or graven image, which Micah, a man of Mount Ephraim, had in his houſe; and on account of which he hired a prieſt, or domeſtic chaplain. Theſe deities were conſidered and worſhipped as the guardians of their habitations, and protectors of their families. The proſperity of their children,

children, and ſucceſs of their ſecular affairs, were ſuppoſed to depend as much on their benign influence, as the iſſue of battles, and other public undertakings, on the propitious countenance of the objects of their public worſhip. Though we acknowledge the mode of their worſhip to have been groſsly ſuperſtitious, the practice itſelf is a clear proof of their conviction of the obligations to family-devotion. Their conduct is in ſome meaſure a pattern, I wiſh I had not reaſon to ſay, that it is a reproof, to many families in Chriſtian countries, who live in the habitual neglect of this duty. O may they profit by the admonition! for it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgement, than for thoſe who counteract the brighter diſcoveries of the goſpel. The Almighty ſhall "pour out his fury up-"on the families that call not on his name."

3. This leads me to point out, in the *third* place, the obligations to family-worſhip from divine revelation.

Now I own, that I know of no clear and expreſs precept in the ſcriptures enjoining this duty. Indeed, as it was a branch of natural religion, it was not to be expected; for it hath been often and juſtly remarked, that revelation does not directly enunciate, but proceeds upon a ſuppoſed previous knowledge and acknowledgement of ſuch truths as are diſcoverable by the human underſtanding. This duty, however, ſeems to be implied in

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ſome of the general exhortations with reſpect to prayer: as "Pray without ceaſing," and "In every thing give thanks; for this is the "will of God in Chriſt Jeſus concerning you. "Praying with all prayer and ſupplication in "the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all "perſeverance and ſupplication for all ſaints. "Offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God conti-"nually; that is, the fruit of your lips, gi-"ving thanks to his name." As frequency in all kinds of religious addreſſes is ſo ſtrongly recommended by the Spirit of God, the united homage of families, as being one important ſpecies of prayer, appears to be comprehended in theſe exhortations. The words of our Saviour are remarkable in Matth. xviii. 19. "I ſay unto you, that if two of you ſhall "agree on earth as touching any thing that "they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of "my Father which is in heaven. For where "two or three are gathered together in my "name, there am I in the midſt of them;" a promiſe which, though it may be extended to public worſhip, is more immediately applicable to ſocial and family devotion. That excellent prayer which our Lord taught his diſciples, is exhibited in the form of an addreſs from an aſſociated body: "Our Father which "art in heaven,—— give us this day our dai-"ly bread," &c. It is well adapted to a family when united in acts of adoration, ſupplication, and thankſgiving, to their common Parent and Sovereign.

But

But this duty of family-worſhip is clearly recommended by the example of ſeveral of the ſaints in ſcripture. Their conduct is declarative of the genius of our holy religion, and the beſt commentary on its inſtitutions. The true character of its profeſſors may be learned from the lives of thoſe whoſe virtues are recorded in the inſpired writings, as patterns of piety and obedience to ſucceeding generations.

Abraham, who was diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of the *Friend of God*, and *Father of the faithful*, is juſtly celebrated for the good government of his family; of which this duty is an eſſential part. How honourable is that teſtimony concerning him, Gen. xviii. 19. "I "know him, (ſays the Moſt High), that he "will command his children, and his houſe-"hold after him, and they ſhall keep the "way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judge-"ment." Similar to his was the conduct of Job; to whom there was none like or equal in all the earth, a perfect and upright man, one who feared God, and eſchewed evil. We are informed how careful he was, in his proſperity, to temper mirth with piety, and attend to the religious intereſts of his family: "His ſons went and feaſted in their houſes, "every one his day; and ſent and called for "their three ſiſters to eat and drink with "them. And it was ſo, when the days of "their feaſting were gone about, that Job "ſent, and ſanctified them, and roſe up ear-

" ly in the morning, and offered burnt of-
" ferings, according to the number of them
" all: for Job ſaid, It may be that my ſons
" have ſinned, and curſed God in their
" hearts. Thus did Job continually." Job, i. 4. 5.

Queen Eſther, too, is famed amongſt thoſe devout worthies who have not been aſhamed to honour God in their families. When her nation was threatened with deſtruction, ſhe iſſued this pious and ſuitable order: " Go, gather together all the Jews that are
" in Shuſhan, and faſt ye for me, and nei-
" ther eat nor drink three days, night or
" day." Obſerve her own reſolution: " I alſo
" and my maidens will faſt likewiſe, and ſo will
" I go in unto the King, which is not accor-
" ding to the law; and if I periſh, I periſh."

King David, after having fixed the ark in its proper place, and joined in the public devotions ſuitable to that ſolemnity, returned to bleſs his houſehold, or recommend them to the divine favour. The 30th pſalm was probably compoſed and uſed at the dedication of his houſe. In the 101ſt pſalm, he lays down a plan of conduct as the maſter of a family, as well as a monarch.

John the Baptiſt taught his ſelect attendants to pray.

Our bleſſed Saviour, whoſe life is the only perfect pattern of virtue, was likewiſe eminent for the practice of this duty. The ſacred hiſtorians frequently remark his joining with

his family or little college of diſciples in prayer to God.

Cornelius, the Roman centurion, is deſcribed to have been a devout man, and one that feared God with all his houſe, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

Other ſcripture-examples might be mentioned; but theſe are ſufficient for evincing family-worſhip to have been the practice, and of courſe to be the duty, of the ſaints. Agreeably to theſe excellent patterns, the bulk of devout Chriſtians, in every age and country, have aſſembled their families, to offer up frequent and united devotions to the great founder of families. Keep then habitually in view theſe venerable characters, and be ambitious to reſemble them. Deem it your honour, no leſs than your duty, to be imitators of the bleſſed Jeſus, and of thoſe who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promiſes. Paul, in the concluſion of his epiſtles, often ſalutes the ſaints by name, with the churches or ſocieties of worſhippers in their houſes. Let your houſes alſo be as temples of the living God; let your families be nurſeries of religion, and ſocieties of devout worſhippers.

4. Attend to the obligations of family-worſhip, from intereſt, or the uſeful purpoſes to which it is ſubſervient.

Theſe are various, both with reſpect to the body and the ſoul, time and eternity. Were they

they conſidered with ſerioufneſs and impartiality, they would prove powerful inducements to this duty. If performed with ſuitable diſpoſitions of mind, it will draw down the bleſſing of Heaven upon your families, and your honeſt induſtry. True piety is the moſt effectual preſervative from diſhoneſty, intemperance, and debauchery, which ruin at once the character, fortune, and conſtitution. It affords the ſtrongeſt excitements to induſtry in buſineſs, and the faithful diſcharge of the relative duties of life. The fear of God, and the ſenſe of a future judgement, which are the principles of moſt powerful operation on human conduct, are cheriſhed by the exerciſes of devotion. With what propriety can that perſon who hath implored, in the preſence of his family, the divine direction and bleſſing on his ſecular affairs, neglect his buſineſs, and ſpend his time and ſubſtance in idleneſs and riot? How can he act the part of an unkind huſband, an unfeeling father, a ſevere and unreaſonable maſter, or an unfaithful friend, after having made a ſolemn approach to a God of love, and interceded for them and himſelf before the ſearcher of hearts? Can it be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that one who acknowledges God regularly in his houſe, will dare to profane his name, and deride ſacred things, in the very preſence of thoſe who have been the witneſſes of his religious addreſſes? A regard to outward profeſſion and character muſt powerfully reſtrain from ſuch in-

decency and inconſiſtency of conduct. —— But higher principles may be expected to influence thoſe who are punctual in family-devotion.

True godlineſs is profitable for the life which now is, as well as for that which is to come. Beſides the tendency of thoſe moral virtues which are inſeparably connected with and cheriſhed by piety, to promote our worldly intereſt, may it not reaſonably be expected, that the divine countenance and ſucceſs will attend thoſe projects which have been formed with a ſenſe of our dependence on the Almighty, and accompanied with earneſt ſupplications for his bleſſing? "The curſe of the Lord is "in the houſe of the wicked, but he bleſſeth "the habitation of the juſt." Conſcious of the divine favour and protection, ye who are the ſincere worſhippers of the Moſt High, need not tremble at the approach of danger, nor ſink under any calamity: "God "is your refuge and ſtrength; be not afraid "then for the terror by night, nor for the "arrow that fleeth by day, nor for the pe-"ſtilence that walketh in darkneſs, nor for "the deſtruction that waſteth at noon-day. "There ſhall no real evil befal you, nor ſhall "any plague come nigh your dwellings: for "God ſhall give his angels charge over you, "to keep you in all your ways."

Further: Conſider how beneficial ſocial devotion is to the members of your families. If you are in the married ſtate, it is excellently calculated to procure the bleſſing of Heaven

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on that relation, and to render it ſubſervient to your moſt valuable intereſts. St Peter, when treating of the duties of Chriſtian huſbands and wives, clearly preſuppoſes joint prayer, or family-devotion, to be a part of their employment. He enjoins them to "live "together as heirs of the grace of life, "that their prayers might not be hindered;" that is, that the whole of their behaviour ſhould be ſuitable to their religious profeſſion, and hope of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt, that ſo the ſucceſs of their united ſupplications might not be prevented.

No affection can be ſo ſtrong and laſting as that which hath religion for its baſis, or where there is an union of hearts in the ſervice of the ſame maſter. When the charms of novelty and beauty have loſt their power to pleaſe, when the clouds of adverſity have thickened around, this principle hath diſcovered its energy in ſtrengthening the mutual attachment of thoſe in this relation, and in reconciling their minds to their condition. Joint prayer ſoftens impetuoſity of temper, and diſpoſes to forbearance and forgiveneſs of injuries: it blunts the edge of the diſappointments, alleviates the cares, and gives double reliſh to the enjoyments of life. It is not to be ſuppoſed, that many will daily approach a God of love in united acts of devotion, whilſt their ſpirits are rankled with jealouſy, hatred, or diſguſt. Family-prayer may be the means of awakening an unequal yoke-fellow

to a ſerious concern about her eternal intereſts. In this reſpect ſometimes hath "the unbelie-" ving wife been ſanctified by the believing "huſband;" his prayers have been anſwered, and his endeavours for her ſalvation crowned with ſucceſs.

No leſs advantageous is the frequent performance of this duty to your children. It muſt naturally ſtrengthen their reverence and affection for their parents, when they hear them daily pleading with earneſtneſs at a throne of grace in their behalf. Its influence is powerful in reſtraining them from vice. Reverence will be excited betimes in their breaſts for the name of God, and the inſtitutions of religion. A principle of imitation is natural to the human mind. Young people are peculiarly apt to imbibe the ſentiments, and learn the manners, of thoſe with whom they frequently converſe, and are intimately connected. Much therefore depends on the example of parents. How can you expect, that your children will honour God, and obey his laws, if, in their preſence, or with their knowledge, you profane his holy name, and neglect his worſhip? How can you hope, that they will pay much regard to their earthly parents, whilſt you ſtifle in them a ſenſe of duty to their Father in heaven? In no way can you ſo effectually teach them to pray, as by praying with them, and accuſtoming them to join you in addreſſing the Great Founder of families. This is a moſt likely method

method of fixing on their minds early and deep impreſſions of the truth and importance of religion, and raiſing their thoughts above this world, to the contemplation of God, of Chriſt, and heaven: it will prepare them for the public ſervice of the ſanctuary, and for the due diſcharge of the active duties of life. Family-devotion will glow the affections of children one to another; a principle of divine love will ſtrengthen the ties of natural connection. They will conſider themſelves as united much more cloſely by being joint ſervants of the ſame maſter, and expectants of the ſame heavenly inheritance, than by their bearing the ſame name, or partaking of common blood. If you wiſh well then, parents, to yourſelves and to your children, do not neglect this reaſonable ſervice. Give not your children cauſe to aſcribe their irreligious and vitious conduct to their living in your prayerleſs houſes. Speedily ſet about this important duty; you will never have reaſon to repent the performance of it.

Equally profitable is regular family-devotion for ſervants or domeſtics, as for children. Reading ſelect paſſages of ſcripture, which ought to be a ſtated part of this exerciſe, will awaken their attention to ſerious ſubjects, and inſtruct them in the leading truths and duties of religion. It is likely to excite them to read their Bibles in ſecret, and to animate them with the deſire of ſpiritual knowledge. Prayer and praiſe may prove the channels through

through which the influences of the Holy Spirit may be conveyed to their ſouls. Many have aſcribed their converſion to family-prayer. It may probably introduce a ſedate frame of mind, check the levity of youth, and impetuoſity of paſſion, and put them in a proper frame for diſcharging the duties of the day; it will remind them of the obligations to ſecret prayer, and ſuggeſt the manner in which it ſhould be performed.

I believe it will be found on inquiry, that the beſt ſervants are to be found in praying families. This may be eaſily accounted for from the connection between religious and relative duties. A reverence muſt naturally be excited in the minds of ſervants for thoſe maſters who lead their devotions, and whom they hear interceding with earneſtneſs for them before God. This principle will reſtrain them from offending maſters ſo tenderly concerned for their intereſt, and excite them to recommend themſelves by their fidelity and diligence. If a ſpirit of unfeigned piety, which is cheriſhed by prayer, deſcends from the head to the members of the family, it will not fail to produce this effect. Ye ſervants of praying maſters, ſhow that you "count them "worthy of double honour, and be obedient "to them in ſingleneſs of heart as unto "Chriſt: not with eye-ſervice, as men-plea-"ſers; but as the ſervants of Jeſus, doing "the will of God from the heart, with good-

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" will doing ſervice as unto the Lord, and not " unto men."

Laſtly on this argument: The exerciſes of family-devotion may prove greatly beneficial to your friends, viſitors, or thoſe who may occaſionally join you in this duty. A ſavoury and laſting ſenſe of divine things may thereby be produced in their minds; they may have cauſe to look on your houſes as places where they became firſt acquainted with God, and your devotions as the happy means of communicating ſpiritual life, or filling them with the conſolations of religion: " He that " walketh with the wiſe ſhall become wiſe, " but a companion of fools ſhall be de- " ſtroyed." Let a regard then to your domeſtic proſperity and comfort determine you to adopt, and put in practice, the reſolution of Joſhua, " As for me and my houſe, we will " ſerve the Lord."

Conſider, further, parents, that the intereſt of your country will be highly promoted by ſuch a conduct, as well as the advantage of your families. There is not ſo true a patriot as the man who is uniformly religious. The city or country which contains many pious citizens, hath a more powerful defence than ramparts, walls, or military preparations, can afford. Had there been even five righteous perſons in Sodom and Gomorrah, theſe cities would have been ſaved from deſtruction. It is a truth abſolutely certain, though little attended to or acknowledged, that the preſent

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ſafety of the wicked themſelves, is owing to their being intermingled in ſociety with the juſt. Their prayers avert divine judgements, and draw down bleſſings upon the places in which they reſide, and the communities with which they are connected; their authority, advice, and example, reſtrain many from groſs impiety and immorality. Nothing almoſt can contribute ſo much to preſerve and increaſe a holy ſeed, as family-religion. The devotional exerciſes of a well-regulated family, and the inſtructing of children and ſervants in Chriſtian principles and duties, have an evident and ſtrong tendency to promote their growth in grace and religious knowledge. Families are, in the nature of things, the firſt of ſocieties; out of them larger ſocieties are formed, or rather they are a combination of them. If families, therefore, are under due government, if the members of them are well-diſpoſed, the church and ſtate to which they belong muſt be in a flouriſhing condition. Theſe are nurſeries of good men, and good ſubjects; this is a fountain from whence proceed many healing ſtreams to water the city of our God, and to enrich the countries through which they flow.

The inſtructions and impreſſions received in youth are generally laſting, and influence mens future character through life. None will be found to be ſo honeſt and induſtrious in buſineſs, ſo affectionate and faithful in the diſcharge of relative duties, or ſo zealous and active

active in any cauſe of public concern, as thoſe who have been educated in religious families.

Conſider the extenſive as well as the benign influence of the duty now recommended. Your children, trained to devotional exerciſes, and formed, by the divine bleſſing, to the love of piety and goodneſs under your care, may eſtabliſh afterwards families of their own, and ſet up their altars to God there. They may probably imitate your laudable example, in praying with their children and ſervants, and in teaching them carefully thoſe things which relate either to faith or to practice, to their preſent comfort, or future happineſs. They again, it may be hoped, will be equally attentive to the religious concerns of their poſterity. By theſe means a ſeed ſhall be preſerved, and multiplied, to ſerve God, which ſhall be accounted to him for a generation: "One generation ſhall praiſe his works to another, and declare his mighty acts. Even "the children who ſhall be born, ſhall ariſe "and declare them to their children, that "they alſo may ſet their hope in God, and "keep his commandments."

It may be reaſonably expected, too, that many of the ſervants who have lived in your houſes, and have been accuſtomed to prayer, will carry a praying ſpirit out of them; and that when married, or when they have got families of their own, they will maintain the worſhip of God, and educate their children

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in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In this way may a ſpirit of piety be diffuſed far and wide, and tranſmitted perhaps from age to age as long as the world laſts.

But, on the other hand, if you neglect this duty, how pernicious may be the conſequences to your country, and to poſterity? I cannot expreſs my ſentiments on this ſubject more ſtrongly than in the words of a late pious writer, Orton's Diſcourſes, p. 130. "In conſequence of your neglect of family-worſhip, "your children and domeſtics may omit it in "their families, and their childrens children "may omit it; ſo that perhaps, before the "end of the world, there may be hundreds, "and even thouſands, deſcended from you, "who have in effect learned irreligion and "impiety in your houſes, and from your example; or at leaſt have never learned religion there. Their wickedneſs and miſery "may be traced up as high as your neglect of "family-worſhip, and be in ſome degree "charged to your account. You had a thouſand times better leave your families beggars, than leave them enemies to God, and "ſtrangers to prayer. Whereas, by a faithful care in this duty, you may leave a "praying ſeed, that ſhall be the ſupport of "religion in every future age, and your joy "and crown of rejoicing at the appearance of "Jeſus Chriſt." I therefore beſeech you who are heads of families, if you love your country, and have a regard to the beſt intereſts of

poſterity, to maintain the worſhip of God in your houſes.

5. The laſt argument by which I ſhall briefly urge your complying with the reſolution of Joſhua, "As for me and my houſe, we will "ſerve the Lord," is the pleaſure or ſatisfaction attending family-worſhip.

What unſpeakable pleaſure muſt it afford to a pious man, to ſee his family united in the worſhip of the great Father of all, and to hear out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings the high praiſes of God? What ſatisfaction muſt it give to a devout and affectionate parent, to communicate to young minds ſentiments of piety and virtue, to ſee them receiving with eagerneſs religious inſtruction, and profiting by his prayers and example? What joy muſt ariſe from the proſpect of their becoming ere long pillars of the church of Chriſt, and bleſſings to ſociety? What pleaſure muſt it yield to a maſter, to obſerve his ſervants attending with reverence on the ſtated devotions of the family, and diſcovering the beneficial influence of theſe religious exerciſes, by their piety, diligence, and regularity of manners? How pleaſant muſt it be to children of proper diſpoſitions, to feel the watchful and tender care of their parents about their beſt intereſts? how agreeable to join with them in thankſgiving to their heavenly Father, and in interceſſions for the divine bleſſing? Nothing can tend more to increaſe the joys of domeſtic life,

the endearing attachment between huſband and wife, parent and child, than frequent union in addreſſes at a throne of grace. Servants too muſt feel much ſatisfaction from the condeſcenſion of their maſters, in explaining to them the principles of religion, and in joining with them in religious addreſſes which relate to every member of the family. The reflection, parents, on the regular performance of this duty, will chear your minds in the time of ſickneſs, and at the approach of death, when all ſublunary enjoyments are unſatisfactory.

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SERMON II.

The Subject continued.

Jos. xxiv. 15.

As for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.

HAVING, in the former diſcourſe, ſhewn the powerful inducements to family-worſhip, I ſhall now proceed to the *ſecond* head, To examine the apologies for the neglect of this duty.

Some ſecretly imagine, though probably they will not have the confidence to avow it, that theſe religious exerciſes are unſuitable to their rank and dignity. But why ſhould you act upon an idea ſo abſurd and unworthy, which you are aſhamed even to expreſs? Can any rank exempt men from their duty to the Supreme Being? Hath not he appointed our different ſtations? is not the higheſt monarch dependent upon him? is not he the King of kings, and Lord of lords? It can be no degradation, therefore, of the nobleſt prince who ſways a ſceptre, to be his own chaplain, to lead the devotions of his family, and to offer up his tribute of humble homage to him who "bringeth princes to nothing, and counteth the judges of the earth as vanity."

External diſtinctions ſhould, in a great meaſure, evaniſh, when creatures ſiſt themſelves before their great Creator and Lord. The conſciouſneſs of any favourable circumſtances in their lot, ſhould lead them to a more grateful acknowledgement of him "who maketh "them to differ." Should our Gracious Sovereign invite or admit any family in this aſſembly to his preſence-chamber, and to a full audience, would any diſdain the privilege, or think it below their acceptance? And can you then imagine, that any dignity, or affluence of fortune, can intitle you to deſpiſe or decline approaching, in a family-capacity, to Him by whom kings reign, and princes decree juſtice? Proud, unreaſonable man, be aſhamed of thy folly!

Again: There are ſome female heads of families, who plead their ſex as an apology for not maintaining the worſhip of God in their houſes Now, though it be more proper in moſt caſes, that a man ſhould be the mouth of a family to God; yet when there is no man in the family, or when he, from age or other circumſtances, is unfit for or diſinclined to the duty, it appears perfectly conſiſtent with female modeſty, and propriety, for a mother to join with her children and domeſtics in recommending them to the divine favour and protection, and in bleſſing the Almighty for his innumerable benefits beſtowed on them from day to day. Should delicacy reſtrain women in the preſence of their male ſervants,

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they may at leaſt aſſemble the female part of their houſehold. Queen Eſther, you know, faſted with her maidens. Tho' women are not permitted to ſpeak in church, there is no ſcriptural prohibition to prevent them from ſpeaking on divine things at home. Many of them poſſeſs that ſtrength of devotion, and fluency of expreſſion, which qualify them for preſiding in the religious exerciſes of the family. What ſpectacle can be more comely, and pleaſing to a ſerious mind, than a venerable matron, with her deſcendents around her, employed in prayer, and hymns of praiſe, to him who is the guide of youth and the ſtaff of age, the widow's huſband and the orphan's ſtay!

Mothers, I need not aſk you if you love your children, and deſire to promote their welfare: "Can a mother forget her ſucking "child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion "on the ſon of her womb?" Natural affection prompts you to do every thing which can preſerve the health, or advance the worldly intereſt, of your offſpring. But do not you believe that they have ſouls alſo, which ſhall ſurvive the diſſolution of their bodies, and be happy or miſerable through eternity? And can you be unconcerned about their infinitely more valuable part Your children are more in your company than in their father's at that early period of life when the mind is moſt ſuſceptible of impreſſions. I intreat you to improve this precious opportunity, by communicating religious inſtruction, and by pray-

ing much with your family. Some of you perhaps have loſt worthy huſbands, who have left you with a numerous and young charge. Accuſtom them to prayer. If you train them in the way in which they ſhould go, they will prove comforts to you, and bleſſings to ſociety. That family is moſt likely to proſper, where God is daily acknowledged. Others of you are connected with prayerleſs huſbands, who beſtow no attention upon the religious intereſts of their children. Be not partakers with them in this criminal negligence, but watch over the ſpiritual welfare of your family with a conſtant and tender anxiety. Suffer not their dear ſouls to periſh; uſe your beſt endeavours to counteract and defeat the effects of the negligence and bad example of their fathers; direct their attention to divine things; teach them to pray, and join with them frequently in this duty; let the danger to which they are expoſed excite you to double your diligence and activity. Whatever the character of your huſbands may be, your piety and attention to the eternal concerns of your children will endear you to them; and your labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.

Again: There are others who urge as an excuſe for their neglect, baſhfulneſs, and inability to preſide in the religious exerciſes of the family. They expreſs their approbation of the duty itſelf, and regret that they have not courage to perform it. But this, my Friends,

Friends, is a falſe ſhame, which you ſhould endeavour to vanquiſh. By frequent and reſolute attempts many have overcome this natural infirmity; and why may not you? Did you cheriſh a more lively ſenſe of the greatneſs of that Being who is the object of worſhip, it would deſtroy, in a great meaſure, ſhame and timidity on account of the preſence of any of your fellow-creatures at your devotions. Some of thoſe who have been moſt modeſt in company, have been fearleſs of man when addreſſing their Maker, or when executing a divine commiſſion.

But perhaps you complain of a want of expreſſion, or of a ready command of thought in ſocial prayer. This defect, however, may uſually be remedied. In this, as in other things, facility and correctneſs are to be acquired by frequent practice. Some who have been very heſitating and inaccurate at firſt, have attained afterwards much propriety of diction in family-worſhip. Thoſe who ſtand in need of aſſiſtance, may take the advantage of compoſed forms of prayer, to ſupply their deficiencies of thought or language, and intermingle ſuch additions as are ſuitable to the particular ſituation of their family. Though I approve more of free prayer, yet I am ſenſible, that well-choſen forms may be of great help to beginners, and to perſons of weak conceptions, or in a depreſſed ſtate of mind. It is ſurely better that a ſet form ſhould be uſed,

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than the duty be neglected. The excuſe of inability, therefore, cannot be ſuſtained.

But there are others who plead the hurry of buſineſs as an apology for the neglect of family-worſhip; as if this were an exerciſe only for idle people. Allow me to aſk, if it is reaſonable for you to immerſe yourſelves ſo deeply in the cares of the world, as to exclude the acknowledging of God at proper ſeaſons and intervals? It would not conſume much time, nor retard greatly your ſecular affairs, to ſpend fifteen or twenty minutes every morning and evening with your family, in thanking God for mercies enjoyed, and in imploring temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings. The advantages attending this duty would much overbalance the expence of time; it would prove an excellent antidote to the temptations of buſineſs and of pleaſure, a ſtrong excitement to duty, and a powerful ſupport under the daily trials and afflictions of life. May it not reaſonably be expected, too, that your united ſupplications will promote the ſucceſs of your worldly employments, and draw down the bleſſing of Heaven on your families? "The lot is caſt into the lap, but the "diſpoſal thereof is of the Lord." In truth it is not want of time, but want of inclination, which is the melancholy ſource of the neglect of this duty. David, though much engaged in war, as well as occupied by the cares of his family and kingdom, found leiſure for prayer, thrice, and often ſeven times a-day, and experienced

rienced its utility in the execution of his important truſt. It is ſtrongly to be ſuſpected, that many who urge the apology of buſineſs, ſpend much more time at the card-table, or at their bottle, than is requiſite for the purpoſes of devotion; and I leave the impartial to judge, which of them will be moſt beneficial in the end to themſelves and families.

But it is probable there are ſome in this aſſembly who are reluctant to comply with the preſent exhortation, from the fear of ridicule, or being marked for ſingularity. You dread the ſneer of the ſcoffer, or the imputation of enthuſiaſm, hypocriſy, or ſuperſtition. Now, my friends, if you are conſcious of the injuſtice of the charge, and that your motives are more pure, why ſhould you regard the cenſures of the world? Would you act thus in your worldly affairs? Would a wiſe man allow himſelf to be laughed or frightened out of a good eſtate, or a profitable employment? I think not. How comes it, then, that you ſhould be ſo eaſily diverted from more important objects of attention, from the concerns of eternity, which are incomparably more valuable than the fleeting things of time? What ſignify a few bad names and ſatirical remarks, when compared with the approving teſtimony of your own minds, and the welfare of your families in time and through eternity? Even ſome pious perſons are too much under the influence of regard to faſhion, and to the maxims of a corrupt age. If I am

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not miſtaken, there are ſome who cut off pſalmody, which is an eſſential and pleaſant part of worſhip, from the religious exerciſes of the family, for no other reaſon but to conceal from their neighbours and paſſengers their keeping up the worſhip of God in their houſes. But why do you affect this concealment? Why would you ſmuggle your religion? Are you aſhamed of your maſter? You are not averſe that it ſhould be known by your neighbours, that you ſit down regularly to meals with your family, at leaſt you would not refrain though it were known: why then ſhould you be ſo anxious to conceal from your neighbours, that you celebrate the praiſes of God with your family, and endeavour to prepare them and yourſelves for a better life? Though to be ſeen or praiſed of men, ſhould not be the motive of any religious performance, we ſhould not neglect any duty of piety for fear of being ſeen by men; eſpecially if the nature of the duty is ſuch, that if performed, it muſt be known by thoſe around us. By ſuch a concealment you diminiſh the influence of your good example, which might probably excite others to a duty in itſelf reaſonable and advantageous. Boldly avow, then, your attachment to religion; it is your duty at all times, and never was it more needful than at preſent. Remember the declaration of our divine maſter: "Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me and my words "in an adulterous and evil generation, of "him

" him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed " when he cometh in the glory of his Father, " with the holy angels." Not only muſt we " with the heart believe unto righteouſneſs, " but with the mouth make confeſſion unto " ſalvation."

There is only another apology (if it deſerves the name) to which we would requeſt your attention, namely, that of thoſe who acknowledge the reaſonableneſs of theſe religious exerciſes, but after a long neglect cannot prevail on themſelves to introduce them into their family. What does this amount to ? it is, that you are too proud to confeſs a fault. How unreaſonable for perſons who have ſo great cauſe, to make ſuch an acknowledgement ! The longer you perſiſt in the neglect of known duty, your guilt is the more aggravated. Be aſſured there is nothing which can put you in a more honourable and advantageous light in the eſtimation of your family, than to acknowledge, that you are ſenſible of having done wrong in the neglect of family-worſhip in time paſt, and that you are reſolved to be punctual in the performance of it for the future. O that you had the humility and courage to adopt and effectuate the reſolution of Joſhua, " As for me and my " houſe, we will ſerve the Lord."

It is not enough that you join with your families in religious exerciſes on the Lord's day only, as is the practice of many. If you wiſh them to be beneficial to your children

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and domeſtics, they muſt be much more frequent. There are ſo many things around us to cool and extinguiſh the flame of piety, that daily feuel is requiſite to preſerve and cheriſh it. As there is no day in which a family hath not bleſſings to aſk or to acknowledge, this ought to be a ſtated employment of every day. Some cloſe the day with family-devotion. So far they do well; but if they would begin the day in the ſame manner, it would be ſtill better. It is highly fit, that a family of Chriſtians ſhould unite in acknowledging the mercies of the night, and in imploring the divine guidance and protection through the day. It may have the moſt powerful influence in blunting the edge of temptation, in giving a proper direction to their minds under the viciſſitudes of life, and in preparing them for a vigorous and ſucceſsful diſcharge of the active duties, for which the day is intended. The ſame reaſons which eſtabliſh the propriety of ſecret prayer morning and evening, may be urged for equal frequency in family-worſhip.

Upon the whole, I intreat all maſters of families in this aſſembly, to comply with the duty now recommended. I can ſuggeſt no arguments more powerful to excite you to the practice of it. If you have hitherto neglected this duty, and are now ſenſible of its obligations, make no delay in acting ſuitably to your convictions. Pay no regard to the maxims or

cuſtoms of the world, when they interfere with the dictates of religion, and the eternal intereſts of your family.

As for you who worſhip God in your families, I beſeech you to perform the duties of ſuch a religious profeſſion with frequency and ſerioufneſs. Do not conſider them merely as decent uſages, recommended by the advice and example of your parents, but as a reaſonable and profitable ſervice. Above all, be careful to live ſuitably to your high character and profeſſion; wound not the religion you profeſs, by inconſiſtency of conduct; give not the world occaſion to reproach you with intemperance, diſhoneſty in your dealings, or any ſinful indulgence, though a worſhipper of God in your family; remember that the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, eſpecially when offered with a wicked mind, as a cloak to their ſins, or a peace-offering for the omiſſion of the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith. There cannot be more deliberate impiety, or a groſſer perverſion of every worthy principle, than ſuch a conduct indicates. The moſt awful judgements are threatened in the word of God, and ſhall certainly be inflicted, on thoſe who are chargeable with ſuch preſumptuous guilt. "But we hope better things of you, "and things that accompany ſalvation, though "we thus ſpeak." Let the purity of your manners recommend you, and the religion you profeſs, to all around you. Strive to be

equally exemplary for pious and ſocial duties; there is an inſeparable connection between them: "He that hath clean hands, and a "pure heart, who hath not lift up his ſoul "unto vanity, nor ſworn deceitfully; he ſhall "receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and "righteouſneſs from the God of his ſalvation."

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SERMON III.

The reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of Public Worſhip.

By Robert Petrie, V. D. M.

Preached before the ſynod of Dumfries, at Dumfries, October 11. 1743.

Heb. xiii. 15. 16. 17.

By him therefore let us offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed. Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves.

ALL mankind are agreed in this firſt principle of natural religion, *That there is a God*; which implies not only the notion of exiſtence, but alſo of intelligence, power, wiſdom, and eſpecially dominion. For if God governs not the world, it is much the ſame to us whether he exiſts or not: but if our lives are in his hand; if he upholds all things by his power, and exerciſes an immediate and abſolute authority over all nature; it is of the laſt importance to us to know what regards

are due to him from ſuch creatures as we are, and to behave towards him in ſuch a manner as we have ground to believe he will approve of.

Now when we conceive God as a being of infinite perfection, and the Sovereign Lord of the univerſe, we are naturally inſpired with eſteem and reverence; with a deſire of his favour, and a dread of his diſpleaſure: and to expreſs theſe ſentiments and affections by certain actions directed immediately towards him, is *divine worſhip*.

That we ſhould in this manner acknowledge him, and own our dependence upon him, ſeems to be the voice of the whole world: for there ſcarce ever was a nation, where men have not, ſome way or other, declared their ſenſe of the being and providence of God; and where-ever they have been joined together in a common public intereſt, there alſo inſtitutions of public worſhip have been eſtabliſhed: and therefore, from the general conſent and practice of all men in all ages, we may be allowed to infer, That, *to worſhip God publicly, together with the ſociety to which we belong*, is another principle of natural religion.

Before life and immortality were brought to light by the Son of God, public worſhip conſiſted chiefly in certain myſterious rites, but eſpecially in offering beaſts in ſacrifice; a cuſtom which univerſally prevailed almoſt over the whole earth, and which, by the aſtoniſh-

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ing event of our Saviour's ſufferings, appears to have proceeded from a very important cauſe. "But he having, by one offering, per-"fected for ever them that are ſanctified," theſe rites were aboliſhed; and a reaſonable ſervice, a pure ſpiritual worſhip, was introduced; according to which we are required to offer in ſacrifice, not the fruit of our bodies, fields, or flocks, but the fruit of our lips, in adoration, prayer, and praiſe, in the name of our great High Prieſt Jeſus Chriſt. *By him therefore*, ſays the Apoſtle, *let us offer the ſacrifice of praiſe*, &c.

But leſt we ſhould reſt in ſuch acts of worſhip as the end, forgetting that it is a moſt acceptable ſervice, and one main deſign of our prayers and praiſes being injoined us, to imitate the divine Being in goodneſs, love, and benevolence to mankind, it is added in the next verſe, *But to do good, and to communicate, forget not*; *for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed*. The end we ought to aim at in all our addreſſes, is to raiſe our minds to the admiration, reverence, and love of God, and to engage us to the love and practice of goodneſs to one another.

Thus the light of nature and revelation equally teach us, *firſt*, That God is to be worſhipped, and that publicly, and before the world; for of ſuch worſhip, it is evident from the context, the apoſtle is ſpeaking; beſides, that it is the doctrine every where inculcated throughout the ſcriptures. *Secondly*, That pu-

blic worſhip is a means of begetting in us ſuch diſpoſitions and virtues as are neceſſary to the preſent happineſs of mankind: ſo the apoſtle here inſinuates; and ſo all nations have underſtood it, as is evident from their religious inſtitutions.

There is this alſo in public religion, confirmed both by general practice and by revelation, that, for the right performance of divine worſhip, there muſt be an order of men ſeparated from the common affairs of life, and conſecrated to this ſervice. Theſe amongſt all nations have been held in honour; and towards theſe the text recommends a reſpectful ſubmiſſive behaviour: *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves.*

But here it may be ſuggeſted by ſuch as diſown divine revelation, That all this matter of public religion and prieſthood has no other foundation than ignorance, ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm. "Does not true worſhip conſiſt," they will aſk, "in our having right notions and juſt "ſentiments of the being and perfections of "God, in ſuitable affections of ſoul towards "him, and in a courſe of actions agreeable "to right reaſon? If he knows our moſt ſe-"cret thoughts and deſires, to what purpoſe "utter words, or perform external acts of "worſhip? And are not all actions of this "kind expreſſions of our thoughts, and then "only neceſſary when theſe cannot otherwiſe "be diſcovered? But will we pretend to in-

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" form him who is omniſcient; or move him " with our cries who is unchangeable? Or " will we think to gain his favour, as if he " were an earthly monarch, by flattering " ſpeeches, and ſubmiſſive proſtrations? Is " not religion entirely a perſonal thing be- " tween God and a man's own conſcience, in " which the reſt of the world cannot join, " and have no concern? And if all this be " ſo, why the inſtitution of prieſts? Have " they not in all ages been a turbulent ſet of " men, who have aimed at nothing but power, " and enſlaving mankind? Nay, is not all " external religion an encroachment upon na- " tural liberty, and deſtructive of the intereſts " of ſociety? at leaſt, is it any further uſeful, " than to overawe the vulgar, and make them " obedient to government?"

Now, in anſwer to theſe queſtions, we ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

1. That public worſhip is reaſonable in itſelf.

2. That it is neceſſary to the well-being of ſociety. And,

3. That there muſt be an order of men to regulate and preſide in the affairs of public worſhip; to whom, upon account of their office, honour and reſpect are due.

I. First, I am to ſhew, that public worſhip is reaſonable in itſelf. And as my buſineſs will be chiefly with thoſe who may refuſe to ſubmit to the authority of the ſacred ſcriptures,

tures, I ſhall not urge it againſt them, but ſhall reaſon from ſuch principles as they themſelves do not controvert.

We ſhall take it for granted, that man, being endued with reaſon, is capable to know that he is a creature formed by an infinitely powerful, wiſe, and good Being, who is alſo the preſerver and governor of the univerſe, and who is intimately preſent with him, and perfectly knows both his thoughts and temper, and actions; that his own happineſs depends upon his favour, and his miſery flows from his diſpleaſure; and hence that certain regards are due from him to this being; particularly eſteem, reverence, love, and gratitude, a ſenſe of his precarious neceſſitous condition, and of his abſolute dependence upon God: all which lays a ſure immoveable foundation for private perſonal worſhip. But beſides this relation, which every individual ſtands in to his maker, and from which reſult the reaſonableneſs and duty of ſuch worſhip; men being made for ſociety, (at leaſt ſociety being neceſſary to their well-being, and mankind accordingly being every where incorporated into bodies-politic, and united together under certain forms of government), there ariſes from hence another relation between God and them, which eſtabliſhes a like reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of external public worſhip. Thus we muſt conſider ourſelves in this twofold capacity, as creatures having a relation only to our creator; and likewiſe as connect-

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ed with our fellow-creatures, and ſubject to the laws of ſociety. In the former view, our worſhip, and our whole behaviour, is entirely a perſonal thing between God and our own conſciences, in which the reſt of the world have no concern; in the latter, both our actions and worſhip regard the ſociety of which we are members. In this ſenſe, we are as a family of children, living under the protection and authority of a common father; whom it becomes us to acknowledge and reverence by our outward behaviour, as well as in private, or in our thoughts and ſentiments: and as it would be highly abſurd in a child to imagine, that he owed his parent no regard unleſs when they were together by themſelves, it is no leſs abſurd to ſay, that the only worſhip we are to perform to God, ought to be perſonal, and in ſecret; for it is to be remembered, that we have no other way of acknowledging him publicly, but by worſhipping him publicly.

Further, is it not reaſonable we ſhould publicly do homage to the Almighty Lord of the univerſe? We will not ſay he is delighted with our homage, or that there is any worth in external actions; but may not a king require public homage from his ſubjects for other purpoſes than gratifying his own vanity? May he not juſtly demand a public teſtimony of their reſpect and obedience; whereby they may be mutually confirmed in their eſteem of him, in their zeal for his honour, and in

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their faithful allegiance and ſubmiſſion to his government? And what other public teſtimony is it poſſible for men to give of their dependence upon God, of their love and obedience, beſides public worſhip? So that it is not only fit in itſelf we ſhould join together in worſhipping the Supreme Being, but likewiſe reaſonable, and of the greateſt advantage, conſidered in its effects and conſequences. For,

When we hear Almighty God ſolemnly invoked, when we ourſelves join in the invocation, does not this ſtrongly impreſs us with a ſenſe of the divine perfections and preſence? When the glories of his power, and majeſty, and greatneſs, are repreſented to our view, does not this raiſe our eſteem and admiration? When we run over the amazing inſtances of his goodneſs to us, and to the reſt of mankind, are we not inſpired with gratitude and love? When we humbly confeſs our ſins before him, are we not led to hate and avoid them for the future? When we make ſupplication to him for what we need, does not this teach us to depend upon him? And does not ſuch a direct and immediate addreſs to the Divine Being leave an habitual ſenſe upon our minds of his all-ruling providence, of his omniſcience and omnipreſence, of his holineſs and goodneſs? And will not ſuch a ſenſe and feeling of God have a good effect upon our behaviour afterwards? And being trained up from our childhood in ſuch exerciſes

exerciſes of worſhip, and the good impreſſions we thereby receive being always kept alive by the returns of devotion, when we are introduced again, as it were, into the preſence of God, and our thoughts immediately directed towards him, can we forget our dependence upon him, or the eſteem, and reverence, and love we owe him? Can we, thus habitually employed, forget the exalted dignity of our reaſonable nature, and that we live and act under his immediate inſpection?

And though all this may be ſaid to hold equally true of public and private worſhip, yet it is from the former alone we are taught, and kept in mind, to perform the latter. Nor could any regard to a ſuperior inviſible power be otherwiſe preſerved among men: for let us only ſuppoſe all public worſhip is laid aſide; by what means ſhall the knowledge of God, and a ſenſe of his government and providence, be continued in the world? If true, perſonal worſhip conſiſts in having right apprehenſions and ſentiments of his being and perfections, and in right affections of ſoul towards him, how ſhall theſe be acquired? If the fear of the Almighty is the ſtrongeſt reſtraint upon our wrong paſſions, and the moſt powerful motive to a right conduct, who ſhall inculcate this fear upon us? If this ſchool of divine knowledge were ſuppreſſed, would not a few years wear out all ſenſe of religion from the minds of men, and ſink them down into lawleſs ungovernable ſavages?

But

But if they are made to know, to contemplate, imitate, and obey their great creator, public worſhip muſt be highly reaſonable, and abſolutely neceſſary, as being the only means of inſtructing them from their early years, and of keeping them ever after in mind, "That there is a God; That he governs the "world; That he is the author of all our en-"joyments; That he directs every event by his "juſt and wiſe providence; and, That he will "finally reward or puniſh us according to our "behaviour." Whoever therefore believes that there is a God, muſt likewiſe believe that it is reaſonable and neceſſary he ſhould be publicly worſhipped: A concluſion acknowledged by all mankind; for where-ever ſociety and government have obtained, there alſo religious inſtitutions have taken place, and been enforced by expreſs ſanctions.

But perhaps it will be objected, That public worſhip does not in reality produce ſuch effects as thoſe above mentioned; and that the greateſt part of thoſe who duly attend upon it, do not in any meaſure live up to the obligations of religion. But is it not evident, that its natural tendency is to promote religion and virtue? Certainly it does it in ſome; and, if not in all, the fault muſt be charged upon themſelves; and they muſt be wilfully culpable. Beſides, though men do not improve the advantage of public worſhip as they might and ought to do; yet without ſuch advantage, would they not be far worſe than they are?

are? Some are ſincerely religious; many are kept within the bounds of decency; and the wicked and immoral are under ſome reſtraints from their conſciences, which otherwiſe they would not be. Few, if any, who frequent the worſhip of God, arrive at ſuch a height of impiety, as to be void of all regard to the Supreme Being.

Thus I have endeavoured to prove, that public worſhip is reaſonable in itſelf; and ſhall now proceed to ſhow,

II. THAT it is neceſſary to the well-being of ſociety.

1. Without honeſty, juſtice, and veracity, there can be no ſafe commerce or intercourſe, no truſt or confidence among men. Now we muſt be bound to the practice of theſe, and the like ſocial virtues, either by a moral ſenſe of right and wrong implanted in our minds, like our natural appetites; or by the exerciſe of our reaſoning faculties, tracing out the fitneſs of things; or by both; or by the fear of puniſhment, and hope of reward. As to the moral ſenſe, and even the deductions of reaſon ſuperadded, (let them be imagined ever ſo ſtrong), they cannot of themſelves be a ſufficient obligation to moral virtues for mankind in general. What they may do in a few of a refined philoſophic taſte, I ſhall not diſpute; but the bulk of men never were, and never will be philoſophers. It is the proſpect of the greateſt good, and the fear of the greateſt

evil, which alone can command their paſſions, and determine their actions; and this ſurely is no other than the hope of the divine favour, and the fear of the divine diſpleaſure. When men conſider themſelves as bound to truth, juſtice, and honeſty, by the authority of that being who perceives even their moſt ſecret thoughts, and is able, at all times, to inflict ſevere puniſhment upon the tranſgreſſors; if any thing oblige them to their duty, this will do it; and that public worſhip is the moſt effectual, the only effectual means of impreſſing them with theſe regards to the Deity, I have already ſhewed. The power of human laws may be pretended to be ſufficient for the purpoſes of ſociety; but if people are once grown irreligious, the beſt laws that ever were made will be openly violated, or artfully evaded. Men indeed may, in ſome inſtances, be confined by external force or terror, like wild beaſts; but they will be no longer confined than they can break their chain; and no chain made by mortal hands will be ſtrong enough to hold them faſt.

2. The only ſecurity that, in many caſes, can be exacted of men for their fidelity in diſcharging a truſt, or their integrity in declaring the truth, is the ſanction of an oath. If they are not governed by the fear of God, this will be no tie upon them; and what prejudice the want of ſuch an obligation would be to the intereſts of ſociety, needs not be enlarged upon. On the other hand, if the in-

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fluence of religion prevails; where-ever the ſolemnity of an oath is interpoſed, honeſty, faith, candour, and ſincerity will be inviolable. And not only in this inſtance, but in all our tranſactions with one another, a regard to the Supreme Being will direct our conduct: and if any thing can create and preſerve upon our ſpirits ſuch regard, it muſt be the exerciſes of public worſhip: for the glorious excellencies of the perfections of God being here ſo frequently ſet before our eyes; his power and providence, his love of right and hatred of wrong, being made ſo familiar to our thoughts, it cannot but often occur to us in the affairs of life, that we are acting under his eye, though no doubt ſuch reflections will occur oftener to ſome than to others, and make a deeper impreſſion, and have a better effect upon them.

3. The very acts of public worſhip ſerve to form us to right diſpoſitions towards our fellow-creatures. For when, laying aſide the diſtinctions of high and low, rich and poor, with united ſupplications we addreſs our common Father, who regardeth not the rich more than the poor, and before whom all the diſtinctions that ariſe from external circumſtances vaniſh; when thus proſtrated in the ſame condition of abaſement, want, and miſery, we are not only put in mind to imitate him in juſtice, mercy, love, and benevolence, but to ſuppreſs the ſwellings of anger, envy, pride, malice, and diſdain; and to cultivate

the ſocial affections of humanity, kindneſs, and compaſſion.

4. It is generally owned, that Atheiſm is inconſiſtent with the being of ſociety; or, in other words, that ſociety cannot ſubſiſt without religion; becauſe there are no human ties ſtrong enough to hold men together, and bind them to a mutual right behaviour, if they are not under the awe of an inviſible Supreme Power. But as we cannot diſcern the hearts of men, we have no other way to diſcover whether they are Atheiſts or not, but by their worſhipping God. When, therefore, thoſe of a ſociety join together in adoring and invoking the Deity, they give all the evidence and ſecurity they poſſibly can give, that they acknowledge the Divine Being and Providence; and upon the matter they call God to witneſs, and plight their faith to one another, that they will be juſt, and honeſt, and faithful in their mutual dealings. There may indeed be hypocrites, who, under this ſpecious ſhew, cover the treachery of their deſigns; but it is evidently not the genuine tendency of worſhip, to produce or encourage hypocriſy: for accidental abuſes there is no remedy.

And whatever be a man's practice; as the ſecret motives of his conduct cannot be diſcovered by us, if he does not acknowledge God before the world, by worſhipping him, we muſt ſuppoſe either that he is an Atheiſt, or that he cannot in conſcience worſhip him according

cording to that form which obtains in his country; which, by the by, is an unanſwerable argument for tolerating different modes of worſhip; for if there is but one uniform method in ſociety, there may be a great number, ſome from principle, and others, taking the advantage of this principle, from irreligion, who give no evidence of their owning a God, and conſequently no ſecurity for their faith and honeſty; and as the one cannot be known from the other, diſtruſt, injuſtice, and confuſion muſt enſue. And if penal laws are added, the beſt and moſt conſcientious will be puniſhed, while Atheiſts are ſheltered, and hypocrites encouraged by an eaſy compliance. But if thoſe of the ſame perſuaſion in religious matters are allowed to worſhip God after that form which they believe to be moſt agreeable to his will; then all have it in their power to give a public declaration of their believing in God, and the proper aſſurances of their honeſty to men. And, therefore, thoſe who ſhew a contempt of all public worſhip, muſt be regardleſs of the intereſts of ſociety, which otherwiſe cannot be ſecured; and give too great evidence of their being under no impreſſions of a divine providence; which is downright Atheiſm, and of the worſt kind.

I am far from thinking, that all they who diſregard public worſhip are Atheiſts from principle; but I take the liberty to ſay, they are Atheiſts to ſociety, and their example pro-

duces all the miſchievous effects which the rankeſt Atheiſm can be ſuppoſed to do. It is of no moment whether one believes there is a God or not, if he does not acknowledge him in his actions. Atheiſtical principles are vented, at worſt, only in a corner among a ſelect number of friends; nor was any conſiderable harm ever done to ſociety this way. But when public worſhip is deſpiſed, eſpecially by ſuch as are in elevated ſtations, the contagion is ſure to ſpread. Such force has example; and ſuch is our propenſity to imitation, that the actions of a ſuperior will have infinitely greater weight than all the arguments he can uſe to determine us.

And therefore, as it is againſt the intereſt of ſociety to lay reſtraints upon mens conſciences in their manner of worſhipping God, it is much more ſo, to ſuffer them in ſociety who worſhip no God at all, when ſuch neglect is known to proceed, not from any ſcruple of conſcience, but from irreligion. Accordingly, in every civilized nation, Atheiſts have been extirpated, as enemies to mankind, not becauſe they diſbelieved the being of God, (for that is an act of the mind, in which men are not concerned), but leſt the ſociety ſhould be infected with Atheiſm, and thereby the ties of religion, by which men are held together, and prevented from being hurtful to one another, ſhould be diſſolved. And if no indulgence ought to be given to ſuch as diſown all public worſhip, is there not

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the ſame reaſon that they ſhould ſuffer in proportion, who, by a frequent neglect of it, or an irreverent behaviour when preſent, ſet a public example of irreligion and Atheiſm? This is an event which they themſelves would certainly not be fond of, (for even an Atheiſt would not chuſe to live among Atheiſts); and yet ſuch perſons are fatally inſtrumental in promoting it.

Laſtly, There is this ſingular advantage ariſing to ſociety from the public worſhip of Chriſtians, that, at the ſame time they meet together for worſhipping God, all the duties they owe to him, and to one another, are inculcated upon them, and moſt ſtrictly enjoined, under the pain of his eternal diſpleaſure; ſuch as, ſubjection to magiſtrates, honour to ſuperiors, honeſty, juſtice, and ſincerity in all our dealings; affability, gentleneſs, meekneſs, forgiveneſs of injuries, proviſion for the poor, and the like. Nay, the diſpoſition of the heart, the temper, and affections, which human laws can never reach, are here taken into conſideration, and as expreſsly brought under rule as public actions: and, in an eſpecial manner, love, benevolence, pity, and compaſſion, which are the ſource and foundation of ſocial happineſs, are recommended as indiſpenſably neceſſary, and the proper principles by which our behaviour to others ought to be directed.

I think none will deny, that mankind would be happy indeed, if theſe divine laws were univerſally

niverſally obeyed. The only motive that can enforce obedience to them, is a regard to God; the only means of impreſſing their minds with ſuch regard, is public worſhip.

This is ſo unqueſtionably true, that if we take a view of the hiſtory of the world, we ſhall find, that ſtates and empires have always flouriſhed while public worſhip was maintained with due reverence, and have been brought to ruin by irreligion alone. This we are expreſsly told was the immediate and ſole occaſion of the grandeur and deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate. So it happened to the Egyptians, the wiſeſt and moſt learned nation among the ancients *. And ſo it happened to the Perſians †. Upon the foundation of public religion, both theſe kingdoms ſtood firm and proſperous for many ages, till the neglect of it introduced luxury, effeminacy, and impiety, which rendered the firſt an eaſy prey to the other; and that as eaſy a conqueſt to the Grecians. Under theſe ſeveral great kingdoms ſprang up, which appeared ſuddenly like fiery meteors, and as ſuddenly evaniſhed; and a great part of the world continued for a long time a deplorable ſcene of blood and maſſacre: and no wonder; for religion was in thoſe days utterly loſt, and impiety and wickedneſs ruled without controul.

* Herodot. l. 2. Diodor. Sicul. l. 2. ſ. 2.

† Xenophon. Cyroped. l. 1. 4. 8. &c.

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But we ſhall ſee this truth in its full light in the inſtance of the Roman empire. Never was there a ſtate in which the inſtitutions of worſhip were more ſolemnly and ſtrictly enjoined, nor more religiouſly obſerved; never was religion in higher eſteem; their public and private actions, their affairs of peace and war; every thing they undertook was ſanctified, as it were, by an act of worſhip. Even their magiſtrates, in their ſpeeches to the people, always began with ſolemn prayer. And it is almoſt incredible what a happy influence this regard to religion had upon them. The belief of a divine providence, and a reverence of the Deity, were to them in place of all other laws. What they were once perſuaded was acceptable to him, that no danger or terror could hinder them to perform; and, on the other hand, no perſuaſion or threats could induce them to do a thing which they thought he diſapproved of. An inſtance of perjury is ſcarce to be found in their hiſtory; and but few of prevarication; and theſe ſuch, as, amongſt us, would perhaps be thought innocent, but were held by them as impious and deteſtable. But I need not enlarge upon particulars; it is well known how religious a people they were, and how proſperous while they continued ſo. But by degrees religion became contemptible; public worſhip began to be neglected, and at laſt to be ridiculed, eſpecially by the great men, (for irreligion for the moſt part begins at them); and then all manner of

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vice brake in amongſt them. That glorious love of the public, to which ſo many of their brave men had ſacrificed their lives, gave way to a contracted ſelfiſh ſpirit; and they were reckoned fools amongſt them, as they are now amongſt us, who ſhowed any diſintereſted concern for their country. Even Atheiſm itſelf became faſhionable; and, in the end, liberty fell a ſacrifice to impiety. After this we have a mournful proſpect of a ſtate without religion, a ſtate of lawleſs power, of wanton mercileſs cruelty on the one hand, of the moſt abject ſlavery on the other, and of deteſtable wickedneſs on both. And though it maintained for ſome time an outward ſhew of its former greatneſs, yet its foundations were ſapped. Religion being thrown out, the ſoul of it was gone; and nothing remained but a dead carcaſe, which, though it did not immediately putrify, yet was gradually corrupting, till at laſt it fell in pieces, and mouldered into duſt.

So true it is what an author, who had carefully ſtudied the nature of government, and who was never ſuſpected of enthuſiaſm, ſays upon this ſubject, "The happineſs "of the Romans was principally owing to "the religion eſtabliſhed by their firſt kings. "—— For as the obſervance of divine wor- "ſhip is the chief cauſe of the greatneſs "of ſtates, ſo the contempt of it brings "them to ruin; for where the fear of God "is wanting, a kingdom cannot be ſupport-

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" ed *." And the ſame author tells us, " That princes and ſtates who would pre- " ſerve themſelves, ought, above all things, " to maintain what belongs to religion in " the higheſt veneration; for there cannot " be a greater ſign of the ruin of a ſtate, " than to ſee divine worſhip deſpiſed. —— " Thoſe therefore who are in power, ſhould " take care to keep public religion invio- " lable; and this being done, it will be eaſy " for them to keep the people religious, and " conſequently virtuous and united." And with reſpect to his own country, he ſays, " That by the ill example of the court of " Rome, this province has loſt all devotion " and religion, which draws after it num- " berleſs inconveniencies and diſorders; be- " cauſe, where religion is, there you may ex- " pect every virtue; and where it is not, you " may be ſure of the contrary."

I am ſenſible, that what I have ſaid upon this head is ſomewhat uncommon in a diſcourſe from the pulpit; but as I undertook to prove, that the happineſs of ſociety depends upon the regard that is ſhown to public worſhip; and as abſtract reaſoning is not underſtood by ſome, and is evaded by others; I thought the moſt direct and convincing proof would be, an appeal to facts and authorities. And from thoſe hints I have given, nay, from the whole hiſtory of mankind, it

* Machiavil. Diſcorſ. ſopra Liv. cap. 11.

will

will appear, that a ſociety cannot ſubſiſt, where the worſhip of God comes to be neglected; and that our intereſts and liberties, our happineſs and ſafety, immediately depend upon it.

SER-

SERMON IV.

The Subject continued.

HEB. xiii. 15. 16. 17.

By him therefore let us offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed. Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves.

III. IT remains now, in the *third* place, that we inquire, What regard is due to them who miniſter in the ſacred office.

But I am aware, that they who would be thought more wiſe than the reſt of mankind, will reckon it great weakneſs, or great arrogance, to undertake the defence of a ſet of men who are now every where ſpoken againſt. The world is ſo ſtrangely changed within this laſt age, that that character which has ever been held ſacred and venerable, is at laſt become the object of hatred and ſcorn. The *prieſts* are repreſented as a nuiſance to ſociety, ſpiritual tyrants, lording it over the conſciences of men, and actuated by nothing but pride, and luſt of power; and hence *prieſt-*

craft, *prieſtly pride* and *power*, and ſuch elegant terms of reproach, are thought ſufficient anſwers to the moſt ſolid reaſons in defence of religion. Nay, they have again and again been brought upon the very ſtage, and employed to furniſh out the moſt ludicrous ſcenes in our dramatic entertainments.

No doubt there have been bad and weak men in the prieſthood, as well as among other orders; and it is a pity the vices of ſuch ſhould not be puniſhed with exemplary ſeverity. But is it juſt, for the faults of particular perſons, to throw contempt upon the whole, and even upon the office itſelf? Is magiſtracy contemptible, becauſe there have been wicked and fooliſh magiſtrates? But I am not to contend for their power, nor even to inſiſt upon that obedience which the apoſtle in the text enjoins. All I deſign is, to ſhow, that this order, as it is both venerable in itſelf, and abſolutely neceſſary in ſociety, deſerves honour and reſpect.

And here again I own, it does not become us, either in prudence or duty, to ſeek honour from men: but as public worſhip neceſſarily ſuppoſes ſome to regulate and preſide in it; and if theſe are deſpiſed, worſhip cannot be honoured, nor have any good effect upon the worſhippers; for theſe reaſons, if we would reſcue the one from contempt, we muſt reſcue the other alſo; for they are every way inſeparable.

If we allow public worſhip to be reaſonable

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in itſelf, and neceſſary for the good of ſociety, (as I have endeavoured to prove it to be), we ought likewiſe to allow, that there muſt be an order of men intruſted with the direction and management of it. The former as neceſſarily infers the latter, as an action does an agent; and we may as well ſuppoſe, that government and the laws can be maintained without magiſtrates, as that public worſhip can be performed without prieſts. This therefore being ſelf-evident, we ſhall not further inſiſt upon it.

Now, as their chief buſineſs is, to offer up the ſpiritual ſacrifice of praiſe and prayer for the people, and in their name, thus preſenting, as it were, their addreſſes to Almighty God, one ſhould think, that this employment, of all others, is the fartheſt from being in itſelf contemptible. I will not mention the honourable names which upon this account have been given them, becauſe the world is not now diſpoſed to allow them titles of reſpect; only I may be allowed to inſinuate, that if thoſe who ſerve in a prince's houſehold, and about his perſon, derive honour from their ſtation, and are deſpiſed by none who have a regard for their maſter; they who are employed in ſacred things ought to be conſidered, by all who have a due reverence for the Supreme Being, as more immediately belonging to him. And it cannot well be conceived how they ſhould be deſpiſed by any, unleſs by ſuch as have a ſecret averſion to the work in which

they are employed, or to him whom they ſerve.

And if we conſider them as neceſſary for the good of ſociety, (and ſurely they are as neceſſary as public worſhip itſelf), that ſhould oblige us to treat them with honour and eſteem. If they are appointed to inſtruct men in their duty to God and to one another, and if it is neceſſary they ſhould be ſo inſtructed, will not this end be wholly defeated if they are once rendered contemptible? The beſt things ſaid, the wiſeſt admonitions given, by one whom we deſpiſe, will not be much regarded: it is the opinion and eſteem we have of the perſon, that gives weight to advice; and the generality, at leaſt, will ſcarce hear with patience what they are taught by him whom they contemn. If, therefore, they who ſerve at the altar are vile in our eyes, the altar itſelf will ſoon become deſpicable. But there is too much ground to ſuſpect, that the ſpite which is ſhewn againſt the ſacred character, ariſes from a contempt of the office; and that prieſts are hated, becauſe public worſhip is firſt diſliked.

As to their enſlaving the conſciences of men, it is not denied, that ſome of them have attempted it, that they have ſhamefully corrupted the Chriſtian revelation, and erected a temporal and tyrannical dominion upon ſpiritual pretences. But as theſe kingdoms are happily and entirely delivered from that yoke of bondage, and no authority is claimed over the conſcience, it is altogether unfair to charge the

the crimes of a particular party upon thoſe who abhor them, and upon all occaſions have declared and exerted themſelves againſt them. And is not every perſon amongſt us provided with a divine ſtandard, according to which he is allowed to meaſure their conduct? and is any deference required to their deeds, but in as far as they agree with that unerring rule? Judges are every where interpreters of the laws; and to their interpretations we muſt ſubmit. But no ſuch power is pretended to by the interpreters of the ſacred oracles: they appeal to every man's reaſon, and leave his conſcience to determine him. There cannot, therefore, be a charge more groundleſs, than that of enſlaving mens conſciences; nor can there be a more unjuſt inference, than that, becauſe the Romiſh prieſts perverted religion to ſerve the purpoſes of their ambition, therefore all prieſts ought to be deteſted. Would not this be the ſame thing as to declare againſt all government, becauſe ſome governments have been tyrannical?

But as thoſe who ſhow the greateſt zeal in reviling the Chriſtian prieſthood, pretend to be great admirers of the cuſtoms and conſtitutions of the ancients, we ſhall willingly join iſſue with them upon this queſtion: for it is an undeniable fact, that in almoſt all ancient governments, public religion and a public ſpirit, irreligion and ſelfiſhneſs, a reverence for things ſacred and liberty, a contempt of things ſacred and ſlavery, went hand in hand.

And as to the prieſts, we are told, that amongſt the Egyptians, in the moſt early times, they were judges and magiſtrates *; that kings, both there, and generally in other countries alſo, were choſen out of their number; or if not, they were conſecrated into the prieſtly office before they aſcended the throne †; and there was a kind of neceſſity for this circumſtance, the prieſts being the higheſt order of nobility. In the moſt ancient authors we find kings and generals offering public ſacrifices, and performing other functions of the prieſthood; and to affront or inſult a prieſt, was reckoned one of the higheſt acts of impiety ‡. Among the ancient Britons and Gauls, in like manner, the prieſts were the firſt in rank of nobility: they were judges of all controverſies; they appointed rewards and puniſhments, and their decrees in all caſes were final ‖. If we look to the Roman conſtitution, we ſhall ſee ſome parts of the prieſts office were always performed by their kings; that the prieſts were choſen from amongſt the nobility; and the whole order enjoyed particular honours and privileges, ſome of which extended even to their families **.

None, I hope, will take exception at theſe inſtances of reſpect which I have noticed to have been ſhewn to prieſts in former ages. I

* Ælian. var. hiſt. l. 14.
† Plutarch. de Iſ. et Oſir.
‡ Homer. Ilia. l. 1. v. 11.
‖ Cæſar, De bello Gall. l. 6.
** Liv. l. 1. Aul. Gell.

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mention only facts; and with no other view, than that the enemies of the goſpel, who pay ſo much deference to the wiſdom of the Heathens, may ſee, that in the beſt and moſt free governments among them, the prieſthood was an office of very high honour: and all I would infer from it is, that, in order to preſerve a due regard for divine worſhip, thoſe who in a peculiar manner are concerned in it, ought to be had in eſteem: ſo the nature of the thing requires; and ſo the wiſeſt nations have always done.

Neither have I given any ground to ſuſpect, that I have recommended public worſhip only as matter of good policy: I have ſhewn it to be reaſonable in itſelf, and abſolutely neceſſary, as we are rational accountable beings: and whereas I have inſiſted upon the temporal advantages that flow from it, my reaſon was, that as thoſe who ſhew the greateſt diſregard to it, may be ſuppoſed to be moſt affected by what concerns their preſent intereſts; ſo it was judged the moſt likely way to gain upon them, to repreſent it in this light alſo, and to endeavour to convince them, that their conduct is deſtructive of every thing they themſelves hold moſt valuable. It is no objection againſt the truth of religion, but rather a very ſtrong argument for it, that it contributes to the preſent happineſs of mankind, and is neceſſary to the well being of ſociety; for ſo do honeſty, juſtice, truth, and gratitude: and as theſe virtues were not invented

vented by ſtateſmen, but are founded in the nature and unchangeable relations of things; ſo public worſhip, as it ſerves the ſame ends, is alſo derived from the ſame original.

And this again may ſerve to prevent another ſuſpicion, That I have placed the Chriſtian revelation upon the ſame footing with the religion of Heathens. But my ſubject did not lead me to ſpeak of true or falſe religions, but of public religion, or public worſhip in general, as founded upon the belief of a ſuperior inviſible Power, who governs the world, in which all religions agree: the neceſſity of which worſhip being eſtabliſhed, let the greateſt enemies of Chriſtianity determine, if any form ever known amongſt men is to be compared with that which the New Teſtament preſcribes; and if, upon this very account, it does not claim our regard as a revelation from Heaven. Let its internal marks be examined; let it be tried by the ſevereſt rules; only let it be tried without prejudice, (which indeed the moſt part who engage in this inquiry ſeem not to be free from), and it will be found to be a religion every way worthy of God, and moſt wonderfully ſuited to the circumſtances and neceſſities of mankind; nay, further, that all the knowledge we have of the true God, which we accuſtom ourſelves to boaſt of as natural notions, are really derived from the ſcriptures, and no where to be met with, except in theſe, or in the writings of ſuch as are known to have copied from them.

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And with reſpect to the external evidence, this one circumſtance is unanſwerable, That whereas it now prevails in many places of the earth, by the concurring teſtimony of all hiſtories, it muſt have had a beginning much about the time aſſigned for it in the ſacred records: and as its keeneſt adverſaries are not able to produce any account, or give any plauſible reaſon, of its riſe and progreſs, different from what is contained in the New Teſtament, does it not follow, by all the rules of right reaſoning, that that account muſt be true, authentic, and genuine? To ſay, that if ancient books and hiſtories had not been loſt, the falſehood of it might have appeared, is no more than ſimply to aſſert a bare poſſibility of its being falſe. But all external evidence in things of this nature being founded only in probability, and not in demonſtration, a high degree of probable evidence is not in the leaſt invalidated by a poſſibility to the contrary. But time will not allow to inſiſt further upon this argument.

Upon the whole, then, they who have any value for their immortal ſouls, who would not chuſe to live and die like beaſts, without religion, without any hope of a future life; they who have any fear of Almighty God, or any ſenſe of gratitude for the bleſſings they have enjoyed, or may yet expect; they who have any compaſſion for their fellow-creatures, who would not be acceſſory to their eternal ruin, cannot

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but reckon divine worſhip one of the moſt ſolemn and moſt indiſpenſable of all duties, and the contempt of it impious to the laſt degree. And if the happineſs of ſociety depend upon the religious obſervance of it, every one who wiſhes well to ſociety, ought to contribute his utmoſt endeavours to have it maintained with all poſſible reverence, and conſequently to ſhew that reſpect to thoſe who are employed in divine things which is neceſſary to preſerve a veneration for theſe things. If kingdoms and ſtates have been moſt proſperous, happy, and free, while worſhip was duly reverenced; if depravity of morals, luxury, avarice, corruption, and other vices, break in only when it comes to be neglected; if public religion is the beſt fence, the only ſecurity of public liberty; if they who have attempted to rob mankind of this ineſtimable bleſſing, have, for the moſt part, begun with deſpiſing ſacred things, removing the reſtraints of religion, and debauching, by their example and otherwiſe, the principles and manners of men; we may conclude, that where-ever public worſhip, and thoſe of a ſacred character, are brought into contempt, that ſtate is tending to ruin; for, as this has always been the gradation from proſperity and liberty, to miſery and ſlavery, we may be confident it always will be ſo.

And if thoſe who are eminent in ſociety, eſpecially they who act in a public character, are ſeen to deſpiſe the worſhip of God, we

may

may be aſſured, that they are not only void of religion, but likewiſe that they are either ignorant of the true arts of government, or have no regard for the ſociety, or have a deſign to bring it into ſlavery. The world, as I obſerved before, have always been led by the example of the great: it may indeed be ſome time before irreligion deſcend from the higher to the lower ranks; but if it once take place among the former, it will certainly reach the latter at laſt: and then all the ties that can hold men together are broken; the ſociety muſt be diſſolved, and fall a prey to the firſt invader, or to the ambition of ſome of its own members.

The greateſt and wiſeſt men in former times were moſt eminent for piety: they ſet glorious examples before their inferiors of devotion, and a ſtrict regard to every thing that was holy; and hence religion and virtue prevailed among the people; and peace, good order, and proſperity were the happy effects. They therefore who act a contrary part, and countenance a diſregard to ſacred things, (whatever they themſelves may deſign), are enemies to their country, betrayers of public liberty, abettors of impiety and immorality, and, as far as their influence extends, promote univerſal confuſion and deſolation.

It is but a poor comfort, that the ruin of a ſtate comes on but by ſlow degrees; "and "therefore we may in the mean while in-"dulge our own inclinations; ſuch evils, if

"they

" they ſhould happen at all, will not proba-
" bly fall out till long after our time." But this is depending too much on uncertainty: the fatal period may arrive ſooner than we imagine; and though it ſhould not, does it give us no pain to think, that we are helping forward the ruin of our country, and entailing miſery and ſlavery upon our poſterity, when we ought to have done all in our power to prevent it? when we might perhaps have prevented it?

I ſhall add only one other conſideration of the ſame nature, but of a more immediate influence. If a perſon who is a father or maſter of a family, ſhews a contempt of public worſhip, perhaps not from any ill principle, but merely from indolence, or becauſe it is faſhionable; yet will not his children and ſervants obſerve it? and will they not thereby learn impiety and immorality? He may ſay, he will inſtruct them to the contrary. But what will his inſtructions avail, when they are contradicted by his own practice? Is not this the direct way to train up his children to a contempt of religion, and to teach his ſervants to be unfaithful and diſhoneſt to him? for what elſe can be expected from them who have ſuch a pernicious example in their eye?

I am loth to make any particular application, but it is in vain to diſſemble. If like cauſes produce like effects, there is too much ground to dread the conſequence of the man-

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ners of this age. Every thing that is ſacred is deſpiſed, and turned into ridicule: our holy religion, though in every part of it the marks of its divine original are conſpicuous, is inſulted openly, and with impunity. Public worſhip, the ſource of religion, and the bond and cement of ſociety, is ſhamefully deſerted and contemned; ſome diſdain to be preſent when it is performed, or are preſent only as it ſuits their humour, as if it were a thing altogether indifferent; others, by an unbecoming behaviour, ſeem to take a pride in ſhowing to the world, that they have nothing leſs in their thoughts than to worſhip their Maker. The holy ſabbath, moſt wiſely inſtituted for the purpoſes of devotion, is vilely and audaciouſly profaned by all manner of abuſe. And all this irreligion abounds chiefly among ſuch, whoſe example has the moſt extenſive influence; at leaſt it flowed from them at firſt; and a vanity of being in the faſhion, has carried away multitudes, who can give no other reaſon for ſlighting public worſhip, but becauſe polite people do the ſame. Thus has a contempt of religion, and hence immoralities of every kind, infected all conditions of men: "For "what can curb our paſſions when religion "is removed? and what will not men do "when they have ſhaken off the fear of "God?"

Indeed it is not to be much wondered at, that they who have caſt off all other regards

to God and man, ſhould make light of divine worſhip; but that Chriſtians ſhould at any time, unleſs upon the moſt urgent neceſſity, abſent themſelves from Chriſtian worſhip, is altogether aſtoniſhing: for as worſhip in general is really a teſt of one's believing an all-ruling Providence, Chriſtian worſhip is much more ſo of one's believing the goſpel; and therefore it is natural to think, that thoſe who neglect it are truly unbelievers, and have denied the Lord that bought them; at leaſt, if they have not rejected the principles of religion in ſpeculation, they have renounced them in practice, are heedleſsly carried down the ſtream of Atheiſm; and though perhaps they intend it not, yet in fact they join with Atheiſts and infidels, to extirpate that religion by which they pretend to hope for eternal life; ſo that they are extremely inconſiſtent with themſelves, as their behaviour evidently gives the lie to their faith.

And now, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, ſince we live in theſe melancholy times, when an impious diſregard is avowed, not only to revealed, but even to natural religion; whereby both the preſent, and, what is far more lamentable, the eternal intereſts of men are in the utmoſt danger, it is no time for us to be unconcerned, or to be contending againſt ſects and parties of Chriſtians: it is high time for all who have any concern for the ſalvation of ſouls, to beſtir themſelves, and unite againſt the moſt dreadful of all enemies,

mies, (compared to which even Popery itſelf is an innocent thing), that attacks us with impudent boldneſs, while we have few to ſtand by us; and it is too much to be ſuſpected, that our own diviſions have in part occaſioned, and certainly have greatly increaſed this evil; and while we have been hating and diſtreſſing one another, we have contributed to that contempt which is fallen upon the whole.

It is far above my capacity to think of an effectual remedy, or how this torrent of impiety may be beſt ſtopped; but ſurely every one of us is bound to uſe all poſſible endeavours to bring men back to the knowledge and fear of the great God, and to a ſacred regard to his worſhip. But all our efforts will be in vain, unleſs our own conduct is ſuitable to our profeſſion. If we are ſeen to be ſwayed by the love of the things of this world, which above all others we ought to undervalue; if we are governed by ſelfiſh and angry paſſions; if we endeavour to raiſe ourſelves upon the ruin of our brethren; if we deviate from that candour and integrity, that ſimplicity, and purity of manners, which becomes our office; if, to gain the favour or eſteem of men, we in the leaſt proſtitute our character, and allow ourſelves in any liberties inconſiſtent with that ſeverity of life which is required of miniſters of the goſpel; in a word, if it is not our conſtant care "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in "all things," and to conform ourſelves to

thoſe divine rules of conduct which are preſcribed us in the holy ſcriptures, and by which we may be aſſured the world will judge of us; we betray the intereſts of religion, we put a ſword into the hands of its enemies, and contribute more than all others to expoſe it to contempt; and at the ſame time we bring juſt diſgrace upon ourſelves; for, by acting unſuitably to our character, we become truly ridiculous, and deſerve to be infamous.

And, next to the conduct of our own lives, it will be of the greateſt ſervice to public worſhip, that we repreſent it, as indeed it is, highly rational, and conducive to the preſent, as well as to the future happineſs of men. When it is ſhown to have a direct tendency to inſpire us with worthy ſentiments of the Divine Being, with the love, reverence, and fear of him; to lead us to imitate him in our lives; to be juſt and merciful, peaceable, forgiving, and gentle; to promote the intereſts of our fellow-creatures; to ſubdue our unruly paſſions; when it is ſhewn to have a tendency to beget and promote in us thoſe heavenly diſpoſitions which will render us bleſſings to one another in this world, and qualify us for the happineſs of the world to come; when it is ſhewn in this light, we may hope it will yet again force its way into the hearts and conſciences of men. *Amen.*

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SERMON V.

On the Death of Chriſt.

By THOMAS SOMERVILLE.

MATT. xxvii. 54.

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jeſus, ſaw the earthquake, and thoſe things that were done, they feared greatly, ſaying, Truly this was the Son of God.

WE inquire, with the moſt eager curioſity, concerning the circumſtances and behaviour which cloſe the hiſtory of perſons who have been great and diſtinguiſhed through life. If the laſt ſcene has been marked with diſtreſs, it grows more powerfully intereſting and inſtructive. The tendereſt feelings of the heart are exerciſed; the nobleſt ſatisfaction is derived, from contemplating, in our own nature, that excellence of conduct which ſuffering goodneſs only can exhibit; we are penetrated with the virtues which we admire, and retire with reſolutions which have a promiſing tendency to impreſs and to elevate the whole tenor of future actions.

The peculiar duty of this day * coincides

* Preached before the celebration of the Lord's ſupper.

with this natural propenſity of the mind, to direct our meditations to the moſt important circumſtances which attended the death of Chriſt.

Miracles performed, prophecies fulfilled, virtues diſplayed, in the cloſing ſcene of our Lord's life, all conſpire to enforce the concluſion drawn by the centurion, *Truly this was the Son of God.*

Miracles are a ſpecies of evidence which apply to the ſenſes, and produce inſtantaneous and full conviction in the mind The ſun darkened, the earth trembling, the vail of the temple rent, were, to thoſe who beheld them, awful demonſtrations of the dignity of the ſuffering Jeſus. To the impreſſion of theſe we are chiefly to aſcribe the concluſion of the centurion, and of thoſe who were with him.

The Jews ſought the evidence of the Meſſiah's authority in the books of the Old Teſtament. Hence the ſacred hiſtorians are at pains to remark the correſpondence of every event of our Lord's life to the types of the law, and the predictions of the prophets. That Jeſus ſhould be *crucified; that his ſide ſhould be pierced, his garments divided by lot; that he ſhould receive vinegar to drink, and make his grave with the rich;* what but divine preſcience could fortell? What but divine power could accompliſh the fulfilment of a ſeries of circumſtances ſo minute and contingent?

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The evidence of divinity drawn from the *character* or *virtues* of Jeſus, requires the deliberate attention of the mind; but it carries down its force undiminiſhed to the remoteſt ages, and terminates in conviction no leſs firm and pleaſant. With theſe advantages, it excites diſpoſitions of heart peculiarly ſuitable to the remembrance of the death of Chriſt.

1. SENSIBILITY and fortitude united form a rare and illuſtrious combination of virtues, and proclaim the *Son of God* through the diſguiſe of external humiliation, with which he was covered, when he became obedient to death. As it behoved our High Prieſt to be made in all things *like* unto his brethren; ſo we find him through preceding life, and particularly at the approach of death, diſplaying that ſenſibility which is an eſſential property of human nature. Without ſenſibility, courage is no more than brutal ferocity: it excites the averſion, rather than the approbation, of ſpectators.

Would you contemplate the moſt affecting ſenſe of ſuffering, ſupported by the nobleſt fortitude and reſignation to the divine will? Recollect what Jeſus *felt*, and how he *ſubmitted* in the garden of Gethſemane: "He be-"gan to be ſore amazed, and very heavy." The hour of approaching danger is big with anxiety and horror. Though death be unavoidable, yet whilſt the time and manner of it are uncertain, the flattering imagination of the

the individual puts it at a diſtance, and fondly hopes to be in the number of the happy few, who may evade the ſickneſs, the groans, and the agonies, which exhibit the moſt formidable countenance of death. But when the moment of ſuffering is fixed and preciſe; when infamy and tortures are appointed; every hope of delay, of eſcape, ſhut out; what an awful interval of diſtraction and terror!

Jeſus had a clear foreſight and apprehenſion of his ſufferings. The treachery of Judas, the denial of Peter, the buffetings of the ſoldiers, the ſcourging, and the croſs, in diſmal array, were drawn out before him. Did he remain inſenſible to theſe evils? He ſurrendered himſelf to their keeneſt impreſſion, and nature recoiled. "He ſaid, My ſoul is exceeding "ſorrowful; and prayed, If it were poſſible, "Father, take away this cup from me." That ſupreme regard to the will of God which regulated all his actions, reſtrained the natural reluctance to ſuffering; and with compoſure, and yet with full apprehenſion, he entered into the field of combat; and he ſaid, "Never-"theleſs not what I will, but what thou wilt." Thus, whilſt he felt as a man, he ſuffered with the dignity which became the Son of God. The ſame amiable conjunction of ſenſibility and fortitude illuſtriouſly ſhone forth when he afterwards hung upon the croſs; ſuſtained with patience the agonies which he had before apprehended; and attentively diſcharged to his friends and his enemies thoſe duties which

which are rarely attained by the moſt perfect human characters, in the calm and untroubled moments of life.

2. The laſt ſcene of our Lord's life is ſtrongly recommended to every generous heart, by expreſſions of the moſt ardent and unabated affection to his friends. It is impoſſible to conceive any ſituation more pitiable and forlorn, than that of our Lord's diſciples, from the period of his falling into the hands of his enemies, till his riſing again from the dead. All their fondeſt hopes blaſted; dangers gathering over their heads, and exaggerated by the horrors of a deſponding imagination; their friend, their conſolation, taken from them! Their ſituation was anticipated with the *tendereſt ſympathy* by their maſter. His firſt and moſt anxious concern, was to prepare and ſtrengthen them againſt the hour of approaching trial. Diſappointments altogether ſudden and unexpected, are ready to plunge the mind into deſpair. Jeſus gradually opens to his diſciples the proſpect of ſuffering. In their laſt journey to Jeruſalem, "he began to tell "them, that the Son of man muſt ſuffer ma-"ny things of the Jews, and be killed." To countervail the ſhock of this fatal prediction, in the ſame moment, and with the ſame breath, he announces his ſucceeding triumph: "And "he ſhall riſe again from the dead on the "third day."

Upon

Upon the immediate approach of ſuffering, Jeſus devotes himſelf more entirely to the conſolation of his diſciples, and pours out his heart in the ſweeteſt ſtrains of affection. The perfections of God, his own dignity, and intereſt with the Father, the happineſs of a future ſtate, are all recapitulated, and brought home to their hearts, as ſources of comfort. That internal unity and love which ſecures independent joys to thoſe who are aſſociated in common misfortunes, are now preſſed with the moſt earneſt recommendations, and bequeathed as the laſt legacy of the dying friend: "A new commandment I give unto you, That "ye love one another; as I have loved you, "that ye alſo love one another. By this ſhall "all men know, that ye are my diſciples, if "ye have love one to another. My peace I "give unto you, my peace I leave with you; "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Their own intereſt, how improbable ſoever this might ſeem, our Lord aſſures them, ſhould be finally promoted by his departure: "Nevertheleſs I tell you, that it is expedient "for you that I go away; for if I go not a-"way, the Comforter will not come."

But it were harſh to ſuſpect, that the anxiety of our Lord's diſciples centred entirely in *themſelves*. Concern for their maſter entered deep into their hearts, and compoſed a great proportion of their ſorrow. In this view, how ſuitable and conſolatory the aſſurance? "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, becauſe

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" I ſaid, I go unto the Father; for my Fa-
" ther is greater than I." He cloſes the whole with a fervent addreſs to Heaven, formed to convey the moſt exalted and encouraging ſentiments of his dignity, and to engrave upon their hearts memorials of the ardour and conſtancy of his friendſhip, which would prove refreſhing under every future perſecution, to which they might be expoſed on account of their attachment to him.

Our Lord was well acquainted with the weakneſs and timidity of his diſciples. He wanted to keep them at a diſtance from dangers which they were not able to withſtand. Attending to this, we diſcern the wiſdom and generoſity of his addreſs to the ſoldiers who came, under the guidance of Judas, to apprehend him: " He went forth, and ſaid unto
" them, Whom ſeek ye? They anſwered
" him, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus ſaith unto
" them, I am he." Innocence can do wonders: " One ſhall chaſe a thouſand, and ten
" put ten thouſand to flight." Innocence alone poſſeſſes in itſelf that dignity and boldneſs which confounds a mind debaſed and troubled with the conſciouſneſs of guilt. Armed, and many, " they went backward, and
" fell to the ground." He avails himſelf of their terror, to procure the ſafety and eſcape of his diſciples: " If therefore ye ſeek me, let
" theſe go their way."

Our Lord's tenderneſs to his diſciples, appears from a previous care, to remove all thoſe circumſtances

circumſtances which might tend to ſwell the tide of ſorrow, occaſioned by his ſufferings and death. In the firſt flow of ſorrow for the loſs of a friend, its greateſt mitigation or increaſe is derived from the remembrance of our behaviour in the days of enjoyment. Every inſtance of attachment, of duty, and of ſervice, is now recalled with approbation, and gives ample reward in the ſweet ſenſations which intermingle with our ſighs and our tears. Every failure in affection, every ſlight and neglect, of which we have been guilty towards our departed friend, now ſtand up in judgement, and write bitter things againſt us. The apoſtles of our Lord had but too much reaſon to indulge, upon ſuch accounts, the harſheſt tone of ſorrow. As if it had been with a view to check this, Jeſus, in his laſt interviews with his diſciples, is at pains to expreſs the fulleſt approbation of every inſtance of their fidelity; and to ſuggeſt every apology, and alleviating circumſtance, for their neglect, which the utmoſt ſtretch of candour and generoſity could deviſe. If the diſciples, in the ſeaſon of calm reflection, were prone to lament, that they had fallen ſhort of the improvements which they might have attained, of the regard and gratitude which they ought to have expreſſed, whilſt they enjoyed the perſonal preſence of their maſter, it would be ſome conſolation to remember, that he himſelf had given them this teſtimony: "Ye "are they which have continued with me in

"my

" my temptations. Ye have loved me, kept " my word, believed that I came from God. " Henceforth I call you not ſervants, I have " called you friends." If Peter, James, and John, were cut to the heart when they recollected the ſtupidity and coldneſs with which they had ſo ill repaid the moſt diſtinguiſhed honour their Maſter had conferred, by admitting them to be ſpectators of his loweſt humiliation in the garden of Gethſemane; comfort and joy would yet revive, when they remembered, that he himſelf had not condemned them; that he himſelf had pleaded the only extenuation of their crime, " The ſpirit is " willing, but the fleſh is weak;" had pleaded this at a ſeaſon, when the mind, broken with ſorrow, dictates the ſevereſt conſtruction of the conduct of friends. Simon Peter wept bitterly, but could not deſpair, when he recalled the overflowing compaſſion which filled the eye of Jeſus, when at one glance he intimated his guilt and forgiveneſs.

I ſhall give one example more of our Lord's attention and tenderneſs to his friends in the *cloſing* ſcene of his life. Among the few who, with unſhaken attachment, had followed him through every ſcene of danger, and who now, overwhelmed with aſtoniſhment and grief, behold him expiring upon the croſs, there is *one* whoſe diſtinguiſhed ſorrow arreſts the whole attention of the ſympathiſing heart! Mary, the mother of Jeſus, was there. What joys had often thrilled through her heart whilſt

ſhe hung upon the heavenly inſtructions which dropped from the mouth of her Son; when ſhe beheld the innumerable acts of goodneſs which were performed by his beneficent arm! What high expectations had ſhe founded upon theſe! What a contraſt to all, the *cataſtrophe* of this day! Now did ſhe comprehend the full energy of the prediction of Simeon: "Yea, a "ſword ſhall pierce through thy own ſoul al-"ſo." The preſence of Mary, we may believe, was no inconſiderable aggravation of the ſufferings of Jeſus. Amidſt the agonies of the croſs, he does not forget to provide for her conſolation: "When Jeſus therefore ſaw "his mother, and the diſciple ſtanding by "whom he loved, he ſaith unto his mother, "Woman, behold thy ſon; then ſaith he "to the diſciple, Behold thy mother." But was it neceſſary that the beloved diſciple ſhould be prompted to a duty ſo obvious, and ſo conſonant to that tenderneſs of heart, which advanced him to a preference in the friendſhip of Jeſus? Whilſt he remembered the ſon, could he forget the mother, bereaved of that ſon, a monument of ſorrow? Might it not have been expected, that the gratitude of the beloved diſciple would have fully anſwered every wiſh and expectation of Jeſus? Every inſtance of care and tenderneſs might indeed have been expected from the free unſolicited compaſſion of John. But *ſuch a teſtimony of affection*, uttered with the expiring breath of her Lord, was a conſolation which himſelf

himſelf only could beſtow. Ye whoſe hearts are moved with tender feelings, ye can teſtify, that the broken accents, the feeble graſp, the look of tenderneſs, which conveyed the laſt proofs of the affection of your departing friend, are held in ſweet remembrance, and eſteemed the beſt legacy he left behind him.

3. The generoſity of our Lord to his enemies, I mention as another example of *god-like* virtue exhibited in his laſt hours. In the conduct of our Lord's enemies, we behold human nature in the moſt deformed aſpect. Malice, though excited by high provocation, and threatening the moſt violent purpoſes of revenge, has been often known to relent, and even to change into compaſſion, when it has gained its effect, and wrought the deſtruction of the perſon againſt whom it was bent. Unrelenting and obdurate, the enemies of Jeſus add inſult to cruelty, and contrive every circumſtance that might tend to aggravate the weight of ſorrow which he undeſervedly ſuſtained. If we would make the tranſition from what is moſt baſe and deteſtable, to what is moſt amiable and ſublime, in conduct, let us turn our eyes from the multitude to Jeſus. No wrath appears in his countenance; no complaint or upbraiding drops from his mouth. He who with a word might have poured deſtruction upon his enemies, intercedes in their behalf, and prays to Heaven to pity and forgive them: "Father, forgive them; for they

" know not what they do." I ſhall not deſcend to minute criticiſms, propoſed, as it has been pretended, to vindicate the ſenſe and propriety of this petition. It is evidently the effuſion of a heart overflowing with benevolence. It was moſt excellently calculated to remove the impediments which before intercepted the mercy of Heaven; and to mould the hearts of his enemies into a frame ſuſceptible of forgiveneſs by the Almighty. Nor are we to ſuppoſe, that the prayer of Jeſus was in vain: " Father, forgive them; for they know not " what they do." The unparallelled generoſity of the deſire would ſuddenly awaken ſuſpicion in ſome of thoſe who, with too much precipitancy, had conſented to the death of Chriſt: " They know not what they do." I know now what I do, re-echoed every relenting heart; I knew not what I did; I never could have joined in the accurſed acclamation in the judgement-hall, to crucify *one* who I believed to be capable of *praying for me.* Sometimes the heart that has remained ſtubborn and callous againſt the reiterated aſſaults of reproof and threatening, has quickly diſſolved under the more gentle impreſſions made by charity and interceſſion. We cannot tell how many at that moment, might receive thoſe ſeeds of repentance and conviction, which afterwards ripened into the fruits of a mature and open profeſſion, under the preaching of the apoſtles.

If there are any among my hearers who are enemies

enemies to Christ, I would intreat them to *ponder the petition* which he offered upon the cross: *Forgive them.* He is not your enemy, unless you compel him. He intercedes for you. If you perish, your crime is *ingratitude.* You have extorted condemnation from him who died to save and to bless you. Repent of your hard speeches, and acknowledge that you knew not what you did. Take the benefit of his prayers, and accept of his mercy whilst yet it may be found.

I SHALL now close this discourse with a few observations, more particularly applied to the purpose of improvement.

1. I hope, Christians, that your own hearts have prevented the necessity of enlarging upon the truth and propriety of the conclusion of the centurion, *Truly this was the Son of God.* You have now contemplated a series of sentiments and actions exalted above the reach of human nature. They were exhibited at a period the most interesting and awful, under the prospect and amidst the agonies of death; they are drawn from a history characterized with a simplicity incompatible with fiction; they are not more above ordinary life, than they are above the invention and capacity of the authors who have recited them. Illiterate fishermen, who dreamed of a temporal Messiah, and spurned at every hint of persecution, in vain would have had recourse to their own imagination, for that magnanimity which bor-

rowed glory from ſuffering, and more ſignificantly than ten thouſand triumphs, proclaimed the *crucified Jeſus to be the Son of God.* The character was real: they have drawn it from facts and from life.

It is the peculiar advantage of that ſpecies of evidence which I have now inſiſted upon, that it not only convinces the underſtanding, but intereſts the heart and affections. This gives ſtability, and vigour, and fruitfulneſs, to faith. The heart, ſmitten with admiration of the *ſenſibility*, the *fortitude*, the *patience*, the *generoſity*, diſplayed by Jeſus, cannot liſten to the frivolous cavils and objections which embarraſs the underſtanding of the cold and unfeeling critic. Imitation of Jeſus, and obedience to his laws, are now purſued, not with a ſpirit of bondage, as a protection from the wrath of Heaven, but with the inflamed deſire of the heart, as leading to the higheſt perfection and felicity of the human nature.

2. The paſſage of our Lord's hiſtory which has now engaged our attention, may be uſeful in aſſiſting and raiſing our views, concerning the value and effects of his ſufferings and death. If the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs; if ſuffering be the ſevereſt teſt of virtue; if the death of God's ſaints, accompanied with imperfect meaſures of humility, and patience, and truſt, be precious in his ſight; with what complacency and delight, muſt he have beheld that illuſtrious aſſemblage of virtues which were crouded within a narrow compaſs, and crowned

crowned a life of perfect goodneſs! Following this track of ſentiment, we eaſily enter into the propriety and force of thoſe expreſſions which the ſcripture applies to the death of Chriſt; that it was *precious*; that it was a *ſacrifice and offering of a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour to God*; *that the Captain of our ſalvation was made perfect through ſuffering*; *and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal ſalvation to all them that obey him.* Mercy erected upon the *meritorious obedience and ſufferings of Chriſt*, inculcates the pureſt and moſt worthy ſentiments of the nature and perfections of God; draws off the mind from attachment to vain and ſuperſtitious ſervices; and ſets forth the intrinſic excellence of goodneſs, as the eſſential qualification for our partaking of the divine favour. From theſe views, you will clearly perceive the death of Chriſt to carry the moſt powerful recommendation to perſonal holineſs, and to demonſtrate the indiſpenſable neceſſity of being *conformed to his death, (to the virtues of his death)*, in order finally to attain the benefits of it, the reſurrection of the juſt, and the glories of a future life. Which leads me to obſerve,

3. That the part of our Lord's hiſtory now recited, may ſerve as a model of the temper and duties which *become a dying Chriſtian.* The Chriſtian muſt not be alarmed, *as if any ſtrange thing had happened to him*, though his heart be moved with reluctance and horror at the

the approach of death. Nor is there any reaſon why he ſhould impute this to weakneſs of faith, or the deſertion of Heaven. It is the law of human nature; a law from which Jeſus was not exempted. But at the ſame time, after the example of Jeſus, it is the duty of the Chriſtian, to call in ſubmiſſion to the will of God, to controul and to regulate the ſenſations of nature. How animating the conſideration, that our glorious Leader has trod before us in the path of death! He teſtified, that it was a rugged and a gloomy path: he is now exalted to glory beyond the tongue or conception of mortals, and has left this conſolation to all his followers: "I go "to prepare a place for you: I will come a-"gain, and receive you unto myſelf; that "where I am, there ye may be alſo."

When you lie down in the bed of death, you muſt not think that you have done with *this* world. Uſefulneſs is the great aim of the Chriſtian; and whilſt he breathes, he muſt ſtudy to be uſeful. Jeſus, upon the croſs, recommended his mother to the beloved diſciple, and prayed for the pardon of his enemies. Thoſe whom Providence has connected with you by the ties of blood, demand your firſt care and attention. Think it not unworthy of a dying Chriſtian, to remove every occaſion of diſpute and animoſity among thoſe whom ye leave behind you. How like Jeſus to bequeath the legacy of peace to your family! Let the rule of equity preſcribed by

Jeſus,

Jeſus, direct the diſpoſal of your effects. Enter into the various relations of thoſe with whom you are connected; whatever in *juſtice* you would expect from them, *that do ye alſo to them.* Maintain to the laſt moment, the meekneſs and compoſure of the Chriſtian. Let not the infirmities of nature betray you into that peeviſhneſs and complaint, which will imbitter the ſorrows of thoſe who now devote their peace to your comfort, and muſt ſoon deplore your fall with the moſt ſincere affection. Remember how patient and tender Jeſus was to thoſe who neglected him in the hour of his agony.

Now is the happy ſeaſon to infuſe into the hearts of thoſe who ſtand around you thoſe pious admonitions, which will ſpeak when you are dead, and render your memory bleſſed in generations to come. Now is the proper ſeaſon to lift up your ſoul to Heaven, and implore protection and bleſſings to thoſe whom ye leave behind you. But take care that the anxiety of affection does not unhinge that confidence with which the Chriſtian ought to repoſe upon the wiſe and good providence of God. What though you are to leave an aged parent, whoſe ſuſtenance and comfort ſeemed to reſt upon your life? What though you are to leave your children poor, deſtitute, and friendleſs? Is the arm of the Lord ſhortened, that he cannot help? Is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear? Yourſelf hitherto have been no more than an inſtrument in the hand of his goodneſs;

goodneſs; and is his goodneſs bound up in your feeble arm? How often has a family of orphan children, left upon the world deſtitute and friendleſs, been all along ſupported, and at laſt reared up to credit and proſperity in life, by the friendſhip of thoſe with whom they had the ſmalleſt connection, and who muſt have been the very laſt from whom they would have expected aſſiſtance? "Bleſſed is the man "that feareth the Lord, that delighteth great-"ly in his commandments; his ſeed ſhall be "mighty upon the earth. The generation of "the juſt ſhall be bleſſed. The Lord ſhows "mercy to thouſands of thoſe that love him, "and keep his commandments."

At this intereſting period your enemies muſt not be excluded. Whilſt the proſpect of death and judgement was remote, revenge might appear grateful, and forgiveneſs a hard duty. But whilſt you tread in the threſhold of the judgement-hall, and hold in your eye that awful tribunal where you muſt plead for mercy, and be ruined by juſtice, can you heſitate a moment, can you deny the moſt liberal forgiveneſs? Look to the croſs of Chriſt; behold him who needed not forgiveneſs, interceding for the forgiveneſs of his enemies.

Anticipate this day the dying ſcene; recommend your friends to God; pray for your enemies; commit your ſpirit to him who gave it; and hope to enter into the joy of your Lord.

SER-

SERMON VI.

On kind Affections.

By JOHN M'FARLAN, D. D.

ROM. xii. 10.

Be kindly affectioned one to another.

PART I.

IT is one of the excellencies of our holy religion, that while it enforces the obſervation of every poſitive moral duty, it alſo recommends, in the ſtrongeſt manner, the exerciſe of kind and benevolent affections; while it enjoins obedience to the law of God, juſtice towards mankind, and temperance with reſpect to ourſelves, it teaches us to cheriſh all the finer feelings of the human heart. Charity, or univerſal good-will to our fellow-creatures, is poſitively required of every perſon who profeſſes Chriſtianity; but to be truly *kindly affectioned* is the property only of a few. There are many who cannot be called bad men, that have no juſt notion of what is meant by it, and who ſeem to regard it rather as a weakneſs than a virtue. By due attention,

tion, however, we ſhall find it not only enjoined by the precept and example of our bleſſed Saviour; but be convinced, that it is this diſpoſition of mind which renders the performance of all our ſocial duties pleaſing, and enables us to live in delightful harmony with one another.

It is difficult minutely to deſcribe a particular affection of the mind; but we may be enabled to form a conception of this diſpoſition, by ſhowing wherein the Chriſtian who is kindly affectioned differs from ſome other characters, which, though not immoral, yet are wanting in that benevolence which the goſpel requires. Having done this, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, that it is our intereſt, as well as our duty, to cultivate a temper, which, while it promotes the welfare of ſociety, is no leſs conducive to our own happineſs.

I RETURN to ſhow wherein the Chriſtian who is kindly affectioned differs from ſome other characters, which, though not immoral, yet are wanting in that benevolence and generoſity of diſpoſition which the goſpel requires.

We ſhall not contraſt him with thoſe who are notoriouſly profane, cruel, vindictive, or malignant, in their diſpoſitions; ſuch characters we hope, for the honour of humanity, are not very common in the world; but he may be diſtinguiſhed from that man who confines himſelf to the ſtrict letter of the law,

and

and who, having no conſpicuous infirmities of his own, has no allowance to make for the weakneſſes of others Though ſuch a perſon may be reſpectable on account of the regularity of his behaviour, having none of thoſe keener paſſions which betray others into follies and indiſcretions, yet his temper is rigid and ſevere. While he is blind to his own failings, he requires more from mankind than human nature can eaſily arrive at. Hence, void of pity, he is ſtrict in condemning thoſe who have come ſhort of that ſtandard of duty which he hath propoſed to himſelf. If he were narrowly to examine his own life, or look into the lives of thoſe whom he moſt highly eſteems, he might diſcover many faults; but theſe paſs unnoticed, while the ſlips of youth and inexperience, with the errors of thoſe who are formed with warmer feelings, are the ſubjects of ſtern reproof. With this temper he cannot exerciſe kind affections towards thoſe who are the proper objects of them. Deſtitute of compaſſion, he cannot admoniſh or reprove with the ſpirit of meekneſs, but renders himſelf, and even his principles, diſagreeable to the young and warm-hearted.

Such principles do not appear conformable to the mild and gentle ſpirit of the goſpel. Though it holds forth perfection as the object which we ought to ſtrive after, yet it does not reprobate thoſe who come ſhort of it. We mean not to weaken the obligations to virtue,

or to give any indulgence to ſin. A Chriſtian kindly affectioned maintains as ſtrict notions of duty as the other poſſibly can; but while he regrets his own inability to arrive at the perfect obſervance of it, he ſympathiſes with his brother who is beſet with the ſame infirmities. He does not caſt him out of his heart, becauſe he has offended; but fondly hopes, that when he comes to himſelf, he will return to the way of duty. As a tender parent bears with the fretfulneſs, and even frowardneſs, of a favourite child, ſo he learns to bear with the failings of his brother. In this he imitates the greateſt of all examples. Though our Lord was perfect, yet he did not abſolutely require perfection from his followers. When they were dull to the apprehenſion of ſpiritual truths, and ſlow of heart to believe, he compaſſionately bore with them; when he did reprove them, it was not in anger but with mildneſs. He did not loſe their affection by ſeverity, but engaged them to love him by kindneſs. We have not in him, ſaith the apoſtle to the Hebrews, an high prieſt who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but one who, being in all points tempted like as we are, can have compaſſion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way. It ſurely well becomes us to ſhow a like compaſſion for one another.

Again, as a Chriſtian kindly affectioned is diſtinguiſhed from a man of a ſevere and rigid diſpoſition, he is no leſs different from a man

man of a proud and overbearing temper. God, in his providence, has given to ſome men a larger portion of underſtanding than to others: ſome are eminent by ſuperior talents, by quickneſs of apprehenſion, and ſoundneſs of judgement; others, who have had great opportunities of improvement, are no leſs eminent by the acquiſition of knowledge, and of uſeful accompliſhments. It is impoſſible for ſuch perſons to be altogether inſenſible of their ſuperiority over the bulk of mankind. It is however but too common for ſuch to be aſſuming and inſolent towards thoſe whom they regard as their inferiors. While they look down on them, they alſo deſpiſe them, and act as if they ſeemed to think them of a lower ſpecies, who had not the ſame claim to the bleſſings of life with themſelves: they not only refuſe them reſpect and eſteem, but deny them that ſympathy and affection which they owe their brother; they have no patience with their ignorance, no compaſſion for their weakneſs. Such perſons, in thinking thus highly of themſelves, do not remember that it is God only who hath made them to differ from another, and that even a ſlight ſhock of diſeaſe may reduce all their ſhining parts to mere childiſhneſs. Neither do they conſider, in thinking ſo meanly of their brother, that though he may not be diſtinguiſhed by bright talents, he may be an object of affection for what is more amiable, integrity and benevolence. It is a melancholy obſerva-

tion, but too often verified, That thoſe who are poſſeſſed of the greateſt parts, often want what is of infinitely more value, a ſincere heart, and good diſpoſitions.

A Chriſtian kindly affectioned, however eminent he may be for talents, either natural or acquired, does not boaſt of them, but conſiders them as given him by God, to render him more uſeful to mankind; he is not high-minded, but remembers how well it becomes him to be humble, who has nothing but what he has received from a higher hand; he provokes not his weaker brother by an overbearing behaviour, but accommodates himſelf to his apprehenſions, is condeſcending, courteous, and affable; he conſiders how he may be moſt uſeful, how he may inſtruct or adviſe without offending. As it is much in the power of ſuch a man to do good, ſo by the exerciſe of theſe kind affections, he renders himſelf more effectually ſerviceable. While he procures that reſpect which is due to him, he alſo engages the good-will of thoſe with whom he is converſant. Though he ſoon diſcovers their weakneſſes and errors, yet he does not deſpiſe them, but ſtudies how he may help and correct them by a gentle and tender hand. Thus, while the man of pride and inſolence is regarded as a tyrant, whom men may fear, but cannot love, the other is reſpected as a father and a friend, who is kindly affectioned to all within the circle of his power.

Further,

Further, while a Chriſtian kindly affectioned is diſtinguiſhed from a man of a proud and overbearing temper, he is yet more diſtinguiſhed from a perſon of a ſelfiſh and a cold heart. There are numbers who, though they will not be guilty of direct fraud, cruelty, or injuſtice, yet confine themſelves to mere negative goodneſs, and ſatisfy themſelves by thinking, that if they have done no wrong to another, they have done well. Conſidering that a man's firſt concern is for himſelf, they make this the principal and almoſt ſole object of their attention: they ſeem to be at pains to ſeclude every other concern, reckoning nothing wrong which is not unjuſt, and nothing required which the law does not poſitively demand. Perſons of this unfeeling temper are at pains to fortify themſelves in their obduracy; and, wrapped up in the cloak of ſelfiſhneſs, are regardleſs of the happineſs or miſery of their fellow-creatures. They find many arguments by which they harden their hearts, and alledge numberleſs reaſons as an excuſe for not exerciſing the duties of humanity: they turn away their eyes from ſcenes of diſtreſs, even though the afflicting hand of God be ſtretched out, not becauſe of notorious ſin and folly, but for the confirmation and trial of the ſufferers; coldly pretending, that they are not concerned: hath his unhappy brother involved himſelf in trouble by his own fault, they immediately conclude, that he ought to ſuffer for his folly; and that o-

thers, more prudent, are neither to be involved in his diſtreſs, nor to pity his misfortune. If all mankind acted by the ſame rule, how miſerable ſhould we be in ſociety? How much do we all ſtand in need of ſympathy and compaſſion from one another? The moſt powerful and the moſt opulent are, on many occaſions, dependent on the affection and goodwill of their inferiors. If in the hour of ſickneſs, and day of adverſity, we had only ſervile hands to attend us, we ſhould then know how much we ſtood in need of the tender ſympathy and lenient hand of friendſhip; if, when we were viſited by heavy misfortunes and ſevere trials, we had none to comfort us, we ſhould ſink under that burden which our own unaſſiſted ſtrength is unable to bear; if when, in an unguarded hour, we commit errors, to which even the beſt are ſometimes liable, and then met with nothing but that reproach which, in ſtrict juſtice, we have deſerved, how bitterly ſhould we paſs our days of repentance? A Chriſtian who duly conſiders theſe things, does not ſhut up his bowels of compaſſion againſt his brother; but with an open heart diſcharges the tender duties of humanity. Remembering that he is in the body liable to diſtreſs and weakneſs, he learns ſympathy; he does not avoid the hour of mourning, but enjoys a real ſatisfaction if he can, in any degree, alleviate ſorrow, or comfort the afflicted heart; he wiſhes to convince his brother of error, by friendly admonitions,

not

not by bitter reproaches; and where he discovers symptoms of repentance, he strives to confirm him in virtue, and reconcile him to the world and to himself. No tears mingle so sweetly as those of mutual sympathy and affection; they are not bitter, but more fragrant to the feeling heart than the richest perfumes to the senses. A person kindly affectioned draws, even from affliction, sensations more truly pleasing to the benevolent mind, than all the tumultuary gladness which can arise from sensual joy.

Again, while a Christian thus kind and benevolent is a contrast to a man of a cold and selfish heart, he is also distinguished from a person of mere vanity and ostentation. It is so ordered, that our weaknesses often become subservient to duty, and supply the place of real principle In confirmation of which we may observe, that there is nothing which more frequently answers this end than vanity, by which I mean, the immoderate love of praise and admiration. Thus men who possess no real love to their country, will often, from vanity, be at pains to qualify themselves to be useful to society, and exert all their abilities to be distinguished in the public service: a man who has no sincere principle of virtue, will often profess great zeal for it, be eloquent in its praise, and even persuade others that he is possessed of it. A man, in like manner, who is destitute of real benevolence, will express affectionate good-will to all mankind; and,

and, though naturally ſordid, may part with his wealth to ſupply the indigent, providing he think that his benefactions will be proclaimed to the world. Thus alſo he affects the appearance of a tender concern for the diſtreſſes of others; tears flow from his eyes, while his heart is untouched; and he viſits the mourner with no other view, than to obtain the reputation of ſympathy and compaſſion. It is againſt ſuch perſons, that they ſeldom fully obtain the end they have in view, becauſe it is but ſeldom they have ſufficient art to conceal the principle from which they act. When this is diſcovered, they are ſo far from procuring our praiſe, that they excite our contempt. Beſides, though they may ſometimes do good, yet their ſervices rarely produce the ſame good effect with thoſe which proceed from real principles of virtue. An oſtentatious act of beneficence may relieve, but it alſo mortifies the perſon on whom it is conferred; an affected ſympathy will not comfort the afflicted ſpirit; and a perſon who thruſts himſelf into ſervice to be ſeen, commonly does more harm than good. Their motive is alſo bad in this reſpect, that acting with a view merely to be ſeen, and conſidering every thing as loſt which does not contribute to their fame, they neglect many opportunities of doing the moſt eſſential private ſervice.

A Chriſtian of kind diſpoſitions acts from a nobler principle, from that of unfeigned love and affection to his fellow-creatures. Though the

the eſteem of the world is never to be deſpiſed, and we ought at all times to fear its juſt reproach, yet he will never make this the principal object of his actions. If he enters into public office, it is chiefly with the view of being really uſeful to ſociety; his benevolent actions flow ſpontaneouſly from his heart, he rejoices in every opportunity of exerciſing his beneficence. As he tenderly feels for the diſtreſſes of others, ſo his expreſſions of ſympathy are not feigned, but the language of nature. In deeds of charity he knows it to be more bleſſed to give than to receive; he wiſhes them to be concealed, and to hide from his left hand what his right hand beſtows.

Laſtly, While the Chriſtian kindly affectioned acts from a principle far ſuperior to that of vanity and oſtentation, he is alſo diſtinguiſhed from thoſe whoſe affections flow chiefly from prejudice or paſſion. Perſons of this character are very common in the world, and we are ready to ſay of them, if our friends, that they have very warm and affectionate hearts. In one reſpect, it is true, they deſerve this character; they are poſſeſſed of an enthuſiaſm of friendſhip for the objects of their regard; they weep with them when they weep, and they rejoice with them when they rejoice, exerting all their abilities to ſerve them. Being eaſily affected, every tale of wo brings tears from their eyes. So far their diſpoſition is amiable; but it is not uniform. The ſame keenneſs of temper renders them ſuſpicious, jealous,

jealous, and eaſily offended It is not uncommon to ſee thoſe who but lately were the objects of their warmeſt affections, become, from the moſt trivial quarrel, the objects of their bittereſt reſentment. Their hatred is violent like their love, and the ſevereſt reproaches often ſucceed to tender endearments.

The kind affections of a Chriſtian are much more ſteady: they proceed from principle, and not from prejudice or paſſion. Though they maintain good-will towards all mankind, yet they do not raſhly chuſe a boſom-friend. They weigh well his good qualities with his infirmities before they fix; but when once fixed, they are not ſoon moved: they are not eaſily provoked, but bear long before they break the ties of affection; and however warm their hearts may be to their friends, yet they harbour no angry or malevolent paſſion towards any of the human race: there may be many who, on account of their vices, they cannot regard, yet they become the objects of their pity rather than of hatred; they wiſh for their reformation, and pray for their good.

To conclude, at this time, with the exhortation of the apoſtle to the Epheſians: "Let "all bitterneſs, and wrath, and clamour, and "evil-ſpeaking, be put away from you, with "all malice; and be ye kind and tender heart-"ed, forgiving one another, even as God, "for Chriſt's ſake, forgave you."

SER-

SERMON VII.

The Subject continued.

ROM. xii. 10.

Be kindly affectioned one to another.

PART II.

IN the former part of this diſcourſe I have endeavoured to diſcriminate the character of a Chriſtian kindly affectioned from ſome other characters common in life, which, though they cannot be termed immoral, yet come far ſhort of that benevolence of diſpoſition which the goſpel recommends. I have ſhown wherein he is diſtinguiſhed from the man whoſe principles and temper are rigid and ſevere; from him alſo who is of a proud and overbearing ſpirit; from the man of a cold and ſelfiſh heart; from the man who acts from vanity or oſtentation; and from the perſon whoſe affections flow from prejudice or paſſion: his diſpoſition is, in many reſpects, ſuperior to any of theſe.

But to be yet more particular in the delineation of this character which we mean to deſcribe,

Let us further obſerve, That a Chriſtian kindly affectioned cultivates a diſpoſition to pleaſe

pleaſe and to be pleaſed. While he endeavours to live happily in ſociety, he ſtrives, to the utmoſt of his power, to promote the happineſs of others. This ſerenity of mind may be ſometimes interrupted by ſcenes of deliberate wickedneſs and vice, which he cannot witneſs without the moſt ſenſible pain; and he may be alſo diſquieted by conſidering the deep diſtreſſes which many endure, where it is beyond his power to relieve or to comfort. Yet theſe do not materially affect his happineſs, or the temper of his mind; which will appear by remarking, that the greater part of human life does not conſiſt in deeds which are either notoriouſly bad, or eminently good; but in actions which do but in a ſmall degree approach either to the one or the other. The happineſs, therefore, or the miſery of life, does not conſiſt in tranſports of joy, or in the anguiſh of affliction; but in feelings of an inferior kind, which, though leſs violent, yet are much more frequent than theſe poignant ſenſations. Hence it comes to be in our power to make others miſerable in life, not ſo much by deeds of cruelty or injuſtice, which we dare not or cannot commit, as by indulging a malevolent or uncharitable diſpoſition towards them; and it is in our power to make them happy, not ſo much by ſignal and material ſervices, which are ſeldom in our power, as by the inferior offices of kindneſs and benevolence, which we are able more conſtantly to exerciſe. Thus a man who gives way to

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a bad temper, though he may not be chargeable with any immoral or unjuſt action, yet often renders every one around him unhappy: he baniſhes kind and chearful looks by the ſourneſs of his countenance, and excites in others diſquieting thoughts in place of pleaſing emotions. A Chriſtian kindly affectioned, on the other hand, diffuſes chearfulneſs and complacency; he is on his guard, leſt he ſhould give uneaſineſs even to the meaneſt, and ſtrives to make the hours paſs ſweetly on. — In like manner, a perſon of an invidious diſpoſition, though his conſcience may not ſuffer him to do an actual injury, yet being diſquieted and uneaſy at the happineſs of his neighbour, he ſpeaks ſlightingly of his merit, and doubtfully of his good qualities; he catches every opportunity to mortify him; he miſſes no occaſion of a ſatirical remark; and by thus hurting a tender part, may often render him more unhappy than he could have done by an open act of injuſtice. A Chriſtian of kind affections abhors this ill-natured meanneſs. As he wiſhes for the happineſs of others, ſo he rejoices in their proſperity; he is cautious of ſaying any thing, though true, which may give pain, unleſs he hopes to do a greater good; and though he will never flatter, yet ſtudies how he may ſay or do what is pleaſing. — Again, a perſon of a fretful and diſcontented temper, by continual peeviſhneſs, makes all with whom he is nearly connected uneaſy. While he is unthankful for many bleſſings he

enjoys, he is conſtantly repining, aggravating every little inconvenience to which he is expoſed, complaining of all that he wants, as if he had a right to poſſeſs every good thing. Such a man is not only unable to exerciſe kind affections in himſelf, but by his preſence, in a great meaſure, prevents others from unfolding theirs. Though he be an object of pity, yet, by his unreaſonable conduct, he precludes himſelf from ſympathy. The Chriſtian diſpoſition is the reverſe of this. While he is thankful to God for the many bleſſings he has conferred, he ſhows that he is grateful, by maintaining a chearful and contented mind. As nature has but few real wants, ſo he can make himſelf happy on very ſmall things; he does not repine at the ſuperior wealth of others, but is pleaſed to think, that he can be as well ſatisfied with his pittance as they can be with their abundance. — Yet again, a man of a ſlothful diſpoſition, though he is guilty of no actual injury, yet does not contribute to the happineſs of others. Though he may wiſh well to mankind, and be even pleaſed to ſee them happy, yet he will not rouſe himſelf from indolence to do good: he ſeems to ſhun opportunities of being ſerviceable, and to avoid occaſions where he may be called to active duty; he turns away from the houſe of mourning, and is unwillingly preſent at any ſcene of diſtreſs; he flies from every appearance of danger, and ſtudies to live at perfect eaſe. If ſuch a perſon poſſeſſes any kind affections,

fections, they are of no uſe to mankind: he is in ſome reſpects worſe than a mere blank in creation, becauſe he occupies a ſtation the duties of which he does not diſcharge. A man truly kindly affectioned gives no indulgence to this ſlothful diſpoſition, but is animated by the warmth of his affections to embrace every opportunity of exerciſing them: he will rather go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting, and would rather comfort the afflicted heart than lie on a downy pillow. If he is bleſſed with abundance, he rejoices that it is in his power to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and take in the ſtranger. — From theſe and many other inſtances which might be given, it appears, that it is in our power to make ourſelves and others happy, not ſo much by ſignal and material ſervices, which are ſeldom within our reach, as by cultivating kind affections, and diſcharging the inferior offices of benevolence, which we may almoſt conſtantly exerciſe. A perſon of this diſpoſition muſt act a good part in every relation of life; he will be a kind maſter and a faithful ſervant, an affectionate parent and a dutiful child, a warm friend and an uſeful citizen.

From what has been already ſaid, it is ſurely our intereſt, as well as our duty, to cheriſh theſe benevolent affections; becauſe, while we promote the happineſs of others, we moſt effectually promote our own. — But this will yet more fully appear by obſerving,

That this diſpoſition renders the obſervation of thoſe ſocial duties eaſy and agreeable, which the want of it renders difficult, and even impoſſible. Thus, forbearance is a duty which it well becomes us to exerciſe towards one another, conſidering that there is no man who has not ſome infirmities and faults. But a man who is rigid in his principles, and ſevere in his temper, cannot make that allowance which he ought for thoſe weakneſſes in others to which he himſelf is not liable. — When we conſider how little we are in the ſight of God, and that we have nothing which we have not received from him, we ought ſurely to be humble in his ſight, and condeſcending to our fellow-creatures. But the man of a proud and overbearing ſpirit, while he is preſumptuous in the ſight of God, diſdains to demean himſelf by an affable or courteous behaviour; he cannot in honour prefer his brother whom in his heart he deſpiſes. — When God of his bounty has beſtowed on us an abundance of the good things of life, it is but a ſmall teſtimony of our gratitude to him, to beſtow ſome inconſiderable portion of theſe, in obedience to him, to ſupply the wants of our indigent brethren. But the man of a ſelfiſh and cold heart goes away ſorrowful when this is required of him; if he part with any ſhare of his wealth on ſuch an occaſion, it is like tearing away the better part of himſelf. — Our deeds of charity ought alſo to flow from the pure principles of love to God and love to our fellow-creatures, with-

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out any regard to the unjuſt cenſure, or even merited approbation, of the world. But the man of vanity and oſtentation is, in all his actions, governed only by worldly cenſure and applauſe: he is at the utmoſt pains to make virtues known, to have his good proclaimed, and to have his reward from men. — It is expreſsly required of us to love even our enemies; but a man governed by prejudice, and of a paſſionate temper, finds it very difficult to extend his affection beyond the narrow circle of his friends, and impoſſible to exerciſe any kindneſs to thoſe whom he conſiders as the objects of his juſt reſentment. — The commands of Jeſus are to ſuch characters hard ſayings, they cannot bear them. But they are not ſo to the kindly-affectioned Chriſtian; to him the yoke of his Lord is eaſy, and his burden is light; he can tenderly bear with thoſe infirmities in others which are common to men, and from which he knows he is not exempted; he entertains no pride of heart, or aſſuming ſuperiority over his brother, but is willing to prefer him as better than himſelf. Deſpiſing ſelfiſh and ſordid principles, he rejoices in opportunities of exerciſing his beneficence; and, unmindful of the voice of the giddy multitude, he deſires only the approbation of God, and the teſtimony of his own conſcience. Extending his benevolence to the whole human race, his kind affections are not limited; but, exerciſing the trueſt generoſity of mind, he is ready to bleſs them who curſe

him, to do good to thoſe who hate him, and to pray for thoſe who deſpitefully uſe him and perſecute him. While a Chriſtian thus lives in love and harmony with all mankind, he poſſeſſes that inward tranquillity which is the trueſt foundation of happineſs. If every man were at pains to cheriſh the ſame diſpoſition, the path through life would become ſmooth and pleaſant.

This leads me further to obſerve, That by the exerciſe of kind affections we prevent all that pain and diſquietude which ariſes from indulging the oppoſite diſpoſitions. This, we may venture to affirm, is a ſource from which our moſt frequent and bittereſt diſtreſſes flow. The man who exerciſes no kindly forbearance, expoſes himſelf to continual cauſes of uneaſineſs and provocation: he is not only irritated by the vices of the world conſtantly before his eyes, but he is ſenſibly hurt by the imperfections of his friends; he cannot paſs a ſevere cenſure on their infirmities, without ſuffering within himſelf. The diſtreſs which a man of a proud and overbearing ſpirit ſuffers from the ſtings of mortification is yet more acute. The world is not inclined to favour the pretenſions of overweening pride, but rather to pull down the man who aſſumes ſuperiority; they not only proclaim his faults and failings, but deny him that merit to which he has a right. All the ſatisfaction which he enjoys in the conſciouſneſs of his ſuperiority, will not balance the

diſtreſs

diſtreſs ariſing from mortified pride. — In like manner, a perſon of a cold and ſelfiſh heart, though he have his own happineſs always in view, yet, by graſping at too much, commonly defeats his own purpoſe; he ſoon diſcovers his diſpoſition, and ſets every hand againſt him. As he has no affection for any other perſon, ſo he has no friend on whom he can rely; all his happineſs is centred in himſelf, and in what he poſſeſſes, which his avarice will not ſuffer him to enjoy, and whoſe preſervation creates a painful and anxious ſolicitude. Such a man is much to be pitied: by ſtriving to be happier than others, he makes himſelf more miſerable; he knows none of the joys of mutual affection, and is deprived of all that pleaſure which ariſes from the exerciſe of benevolence.—To how much diſtreſs alſo does the man who gives way to paſſion expoſe himſelf. Though he may be ſometimes happy in the ſociety of the few friends towards whom his heart is warm, yet how much oftener is his breaſt torn by the painful feelings of envy, anger, malice, and revenge. Theſe are as thorns in his pillow, which diſturb his repoſe; he can hardly turn himſelf, but he meets with objects which excite painful ſenſations. A man who exerciſes kindly affections is in a great meaſure freed from all theſe diſquietudes: he may be ſorry for the vices and follies of mankind; but this cauſes rather a tender regret, than a painful feeling, for the infirmities of others. By a humble and courteous

teous behaviour, he engages the love and affection of mankind; he ſuffers not the pain of mortification, but is rather the object of univerſal good-will. By a generous and friendly conduct, he makes others happy, and is happy in receiving the returns of friendſhip; and by a mild and gentle ſpirit, he conſtantly maintains the tranquillity of his own mind.

But yet again, by the exerciſe of kind affections, we ſhall not only prevent thoſe diſquietudes to which otherwiſe we are expoſed, but diſcourage to the utmoſt that ſpirit of ſlander and defamation too frequent amongſt thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians. If our brother have offended, the rule laid down for our conduct is plain: — we are firſt to tell him his fault in private; if he reject our repeated admonitions, we are then to tell it to the church: it is not until he is found obſtinate and irreclaimable that we are to regard him as a profane perſon. But the general conduct of mankind is almoſt the reverſe of this. The ſlighteſt ſurmiſes are made the ground of defamation; the beſt characters are often blackened by calumny; the infirmities of our brother are repreſented with all their aggravations; or, becauſe he has done wrong in a few inſtances, he is perſecuted with unrelenting reproach. There can be nothing more oppoſite to this than that temper and ſpirit which the goſpel recommends, which enjoins charity as the bond of perfectneſs. If we be poſſeſſed of kind affections, we ſhall give no harbour to this malignant diſpoſition.

poſition. We know how we are inclined to act towards thoſe whom we love. If they have infirmities, we bear with them; if they have faults, we wiſh to hide and correct them; if they be unjuſtly accuſed, we defend them; and if they have eminent good qualities, we honour and eſteem them. Kind affections will teach us to act with the ſame ſpirit towards all mankind, to live in love and peace with every one of our fellow-creatures.

To conclude: Let me obſerve, that to be poſſeſſed of ſuch a diſpoſition as I have now deſcribed, is no eaſy attainment. It is even beyond human power to arrive fully at it; the divine grace becomes neceſſary to produce it in the ſoul. We may of ourſelves ſuppreſs malevolent affections, but we cannot eradicate them; we may feel occaſional emotions of kindneſs, but they are not uniform or laſting; and we may by conſtraint appear affectionate, but we ſhall ſtill want the principle of true benevolence. Divine power is required to ſoften the hardneſs of the heart, to ſweeten the ſourneſs of our temper, to bring down our high thoughts, to moderate our paſſions, and to regulate our deſires. It is no leſs neceſſary to implant in their ſtead thoſe diſpoſitions which are amiable, kind, and good. This wiſdom is therefore declared to be "from *above*, which "is pure and peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to "be intreated, full of good fruits, without "hypocriſy

" hypocrisy and without partiality." To Heaven therefore let us apply by fervent and earnest prayer, through Jesus Christ, that we may be enabled to become kindly affectioned one to another. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON VIII.

Our Saviour's prayer for the union of his followers conſidered.

By WILLIAM MACGILL, A. M.

JOHN xvii. 20. 21.

Neither pray I for theſe alone, but for them alſo which ſhall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou haſt ſent me.

THIS is the ſolemn and earneſt requeſt, my brethren, which our divine Maſter, now about to leave the world, addreſſed to his Father, not only in behalf of the apoſtles, whom he had choſen to be the chief miniſters of his kingdom; but likewiſe in behalf of all thoſe who ſhould be brought to the faith through their preaching and teſtimony; of which number we ourſelves are. Of how much importance the union here mentioned was in his eyes, and how near it lay to his heart, may appear, not only from the ardour of his expreſſions, but from the diſtinguiſhed place it holds in this interceſſory prayer; and, above

above all, from the intimation he gives, that the belief of his divine miſſion, or, which is the ſame thing, the progreſs of his religion among men, was to have an eſſential dependence on it. His firſt requeſt for the apoſtles is, "Holy Father, keep through thine own "name thoſe whom thou haſt given me, that "they may be *one*, as we are;" and his firſt requeſt for other believers is, "That they all "may be *one*, as thou, Father, art in me, "and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in "us: that the world may believe that thou "haſt ſent me."

Who is there then, brethren, among us, aſſembled as we are this day *, with a profeſſed deſign to honour the memory of Jeſus Chriſt, and to "ſhew his death till he come;" who is there of us, or who is he that bears the Chriſtian name, and does not, from the bottom of his ſoul, join in this prayer of the Son of God, with a firm reſolution to exert his utmoſt endeavours that it may be anſwered and fulfilled, ſo far as his influence can extend? Aſſuredly every one will do ſo who has any ſentiments of ſincere love and reſpect for the Lord Jeſus remaining in his breaſt, or any ſuitable concern to promote his intereſt in the world.

What I propoſe, through divine aſſiſtance, in diſcourſing farther on this intereſting ſubject, is only,

* Preached at the celebration of the Lord's ſupper.

1. To

1. To explain the union which Jeſus Chriſt here prays for in behalf of his followers; or, To inquire in what reſpects he deſires that they may be one; and then,

2. To ſhew the importance and neceſſity of this union among the profeſſed followers of Chriſt, for bringing the world to the faith of his divine miſſion and doctrine.

THAT we may be in a better condition to join our prayers and labours in this caſe, to thoſe of our bleſſed Lord, I would endeavour, in the

I. Firſt place, To explain the union which he here aſks of his Father in our behalf; or, To inquire in what reſpects he deſires that we may be *one*.

Men may be one, no doubt, and often are ſo, in a very different ſenſe from what is here intended. They may be one in nature, in blood, or affinity; they may be one in their love and attachment to this preſent world, in their deſire of riches, power, or pleaſure; they may be united in their political or party ſchemes; they may be aſſociates in vice. It is another ſort of union which Jeſus Chriſt deſires for his diſciples; a higher and more holy union; an union reſembling that which ſubſiſts between himſelf and his Father; nay, an union which may connect them, in the ſtricteſt manner, with his Father and him; and finally, an union, the effect of which would be, to convert the world to the Chriſtian religion. Theſe characters of it, which are plainly ſuggeſted in the text, will aſſiſt us to diſcover

what the nature of it is. Now this bleſſed union, I apprehend, doth principally reſpect three things, of the utmoſt importance to the followers of Jeſus, and, through them, to all mankind; namely, an union in the participation of the ſame Divine Spirit; an union in the faith and obedience of the ſame goſpel; and, laſtly, an union of love and concord among themſelves. I do not mean, that theſe are ſo many diſtinct parts or ingredients of the union which the Saviour of the world here prays for; for each one of them perhaps may be ſo taken as to include all the reſt; but I mention them as ſo many different views under which this ſacred union may be conſidered, and which will enable us more fully to underſtand it. Let us reſume them in order; and,

1. Let us conſider this union, which is the ſubject of our Saviour's interceſſion in behalf of his followers, as it reſpects their partaking in common of the ſame Divine Spirit. For if the Holy Spirit of God, which dwelt without meaſure in Jeſus Chriſt his Son, was, through him, communicated, in due proportion, to thoſe alſo who ſhould believe on his name, it is plain, that theſe believers would be united at once to him and his Father, and likewiſe to one another, by one and the ſame Spirit poſſeſſing and inſpiring them.

Our Lord often argues, and proves the union between himſelf and his Father, from thoſe mighty works which he wrought "through the Spirit of God," or "which "God did by him."—"If I do not the works "of

" of my Father," ſays he, " believe me not ;
" but if I do, though ye believe not me, be-
" lieve the works ; that ye may know I be-
" lieve that the Father is in me, and I in
" him." And again, " The words that I
" ſpeak unto you, I ſpeak not of myſelf ; but
" the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth
" the works. Believe me, that I am in the
" Father, and the Father in me ; or elſe be-
" lieve me for the very works ſake." And to the ſame purpoſe in other paſſages : the plain import of which is, that men might and ought to know, and be perſuaded, that the Father, or the Spirit of the Father, was in him, by the words which he ſpake, and the works which he did ; both of them evident demonſtrations of divine illumination and authority. The truth is, Jeſus delivered all his inſtructions, and performed all his works, by the Spirit of God, which was not given by meaſure unto him. Hence it was manifeſt to all candid and unprejudiced minds, that the Father's power, wiſdom, holineſs, and benignity, reſided in him ; that he was " the brightneſs of the
" Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his
" perſon ;" or " God manifeſt in the fleſh." And hence he could truly ſay, that " who-
" ever had ſeen him, had ſeen the Father ;" and that " he that hated him, hated his Father
" alſo."

Accordingly the union of Chriſtians, by their partaking all of the ſame ſpirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, is often inſiſt-

ed on throughout the New Teſtament. "Ye "are builded together," ſays the Apoſtle Paul, "For an habitation of God through "the Spirit."—"There is one body and one "ſpirit," adds he, "even as ye are called in "one hope of your calling."—"Endeavour to "keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of "peace."—"For by one Spirit we are all "baptized into one body, whether we be Jews "or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; "and have been all made to drink into one "Spirit;" or rather at one Spirit, as a well, or copious fountain.

Now this communication of the Divine Spirit to the members of Chriſt's body, includes, as I conceive it, both thoſe miraculous gifts and powers that were peculiar to the firſt Chriſtians, and likewiſe thoſe moral endowments, thoſe ſaving influences from above, which have been in ſome meaſure imparted to good men in all ages, eſpecially under the goſpel, and which are common to the firſt Chriſtians, and to us at this day. Of the former I ſhall ſay nothing at preſent; becauſe, however proper or neceſſary they might be, at the beginning of the goſpel, for vindicating the cauſe of Chriſt, and convincing the world of his divine miſſion, they were not intended for all ages of the church; and I would ſpeak of this prayer of our Lord only as it concerns Chriſtians of every age. In fact, my brethren, the ſupernatural powers and gifts that were imparted to the early Chriſtian converts,

did

did not, of themſelves alone, form a real or perfect union, either between thoſe who received them, or between them and Chriſt. For he expreſsly ſpeaks of ſome who might propheſy, and caſt out devils, and do many wonderful works in his name, to whom nevertheleſs he will profeſs that he never knew them. Nor would theſe extraordinary gifts have been ſufficient to eſtabliſh the faith of the goſpel among unbelievers, if they had not been attended, in the new converts, with thoſe moral effects of the Divine Spirit, which ought alſo to be in us, and which were viſible in their good tempers and lives.

Our Lord aſſures us, from the affecting example of an earthly parent, how well diſpoſed our heavenly Father is to "give the Holy "Spirit to them that aſk him" St Paul prays for the Epheſian converts, probably after they had received miraculous gifts, "that the God "of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of "glory, would give unto them the ſpirit of "wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of "him, the eyes of their underſtanding being "enlightened;" — and "that he would "grant them, according to the riches of his "glory, to be ſtrengthened with might by "his Spirit in the inner man." He exhorts them to "walk as children of light: for the "fruit of the Spirit," ſays he, "is in all "goodneſs, and righteouſneſs, and truth." — "If a man love me," ſays Chriſt, "he will "keep my words, and my Father will love

" him; and we will come unto him, and " make our abode with him." — " Ye are " not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," says the apostle to the Romans, " if so be that the " Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any " man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is " none of his." And in innumerable other passages, the Spirit of God, or of Christ, is spoken of as the common and indispensable endowment of every good Christian. It is by this Divine Spirit residing in us, and in concurrence with the right exercise of our rational faculties, and a faithful use of the word of God, enlightening our understandings, sanctifying our hearts, supporting our weakness under afflictions and temptations, and causing us to abound in all the virtues of a Christian life; it is by this Spirit alone that we can be vitally united to God or Christ, and have fellowship with the Father and the Son. In proportion as we lose this Spirit, we languish, and die in the sight of God, and cease to have any real or solid principle of union either with him or one another. But were we all possessed of a suitable portion of this celestial Spirit, (which we may and ought to be), not a worldly, corrupt, blind, uncharitable spirit, but a spirit of light, of wisdom, of holiness, and joy; a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind: then our whole conduct would be worthy of God, and agreeable to him; we would be all as one body, animated by one soul; God would have constant intercourse

and

and ſociety with us; and it would be the main ſtudy of us all, to fulfil each others joy in the Lord. And this is the firſt view which I mentioned of the union our divine Saviour prays for to us. Let us proceed to what was obſerved in the

2. Second place, as the ſubject of this earneſt interceſſion of his in behalf of his followers; I mean, that they might be *one* in the faith and obedience of his doctrine. For ſuch muſt we be, my brethren, if our union is to bear a reſemblance to that of Chriſt and his Father, and if we would be one in them.

As the Father dwelt in Jeſus Chriſt, by the fulneſs of his Spirit, ſo Jeſus was in the Father, by his exact and punctual obſervance of the Father's inſtructions, and by his doing always thoſe things that were acceptable in his ſight; ſo that in eſtabliſhing the law or doctrine of the goſpel, and in accompliſhing the grand ſcheme of man's redemption thereby, he and his Father were, and ever will be, one. Hence we find ſuch declarations as theſe, ſo often, and ſo ſolemnly repeated by our Lord in the courſe of his miniſtry: "My doctrine "is not mine, but his that ſent me."—"I "have not ſpoken of myſelf, but the Father "which ſent me. He gave me command-"ment, what I ſhould ſay, and what I ſhould "ſpeak."—"I do nothing of myſelf; but "as the Father hath taught me, I ſpeak theſe "things. And he that ſent me, is with me: "the

" the Father hath not left me alone; for I do " always thoſe things that pleaſe him."

Jeſus therefore, ſo faithful himſelf in teaching the truth which he had received from his Father, and in giving teſtimony to it by his whole life and actions, and even by his blood, was juſtly ſolicitous that his followers ſhould be united in the profeſſion and practice of it; adhering to it with unſhaken conſtancy, whatever troubles it might expoſe them to in the world, and preſerving this precious treaſure, brought them from above, pure and uncorrupted by any foreign mixtures. Without this, they would be as little one as the reſt of the world, of whom the Jews and Gentiles were at irreconcileable variance; and the Gentiles moreover divided among themſelves by innumerable and endleſs ſuperſtitions. Whereas it was his deſign to bring men together upon the affair of religion; and to give them, at the ſame time, one ſpirit to animate them, and one faith to enlighten and direct them: and by uniting in the obedience of this faith, as taught by him, they would be one in the Father and him.

It was indeed highly deſireable, that his followers ſhould all concur in the ſame views and ſentiments concerning his doctrine; and that, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, they ſhould be " perfectly joined together in the ſame mind, " and in the ſame judgement," upon that head. And ſince the inſpired apoſtle ſo often makes this unity of ſentiment in religion

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the ſubject of his precepts and exhortations, it cannot be thought a thing impracticable in itſelf, however much it may be ſo by the methods that have been uſually taken to promote it. If it were in itſelf impoſſible to be attained, how could ſo many apoſtles and prophets have agreed in delivering to us the ſame doctrine? how could it be the duty of Chriſtians, to endeavour to be agreed in the belief of it? and, let me add, how could it be their duty to ſeek the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jeſus? For whereas there are a thouſand different ways of error, the truth, as all muſt allow, lies in one point; and therefore, as far as men are in poſſeſſion of the truth, ſo far they are, and neceſſarily muſt be, of one mind. Two perſons may agree, and be both wrong; they may likewiſe differ, and be both wrong; but they cannot differ upon the ſame thing, and be both right. Hence it follows, that though Chriſtians *may* be agreed in error; yet in the truth there *muſt* be an agreement among them: the one is always in exact proportion to the other; and they are not more obliged to underſtand their religion, or any part of it truly, than they are to be of the ſame judgement upon it. And if Chriſtians were always to keep in mind one great principle, which they all profeſs, and to follow it with honeſty, humility, and candour, in all its juſt and obvious conſequences; that is to ſay, if, filled with the love of truth and virtue for its own ſake, without regard to any worldly

worldly conſiderations, or ſelfiſh intereſts, they would reſolve ſimply to learn from Jeſus Chriſt, their common Lord and Maſter; and, ſetting aſide all other authority in matters of religion, to make his words, and thoſe of his inſpired apoſtles, the ſole rule of their thoughts and actions; freely communicating their ſentiments to each other, as occaſion offered, for their mutual edification; but never pretending to dictate or impoſe them; perhaps it might be more difficult for them to differ, in any material point of Chriſtianity, than to agree. Some of them might have higher meaſures of knowledge in the Chriſtian doctrine than others; but it is probable there would be no conſiderable diverſity or oppoſition amongſt them, even as to ſentiment or opinion. Nor do theſe prerequiſites to union of judgement which I have now mentioned, contain any thing in them that is very great or extraordinary, or beyond the reach of humanity. They are but the common duties of our religion, my brethren; nothing more than what all Chriſtians are bound to every day of their lives, and what they all acknowledge the obligation of.

However it be, this was certainly agreeable to the mind and will of Chriſt, and this no doubt he prayed for, as far as the darkneſs and infirmity of our preſent ſtate might admit of it. For upon this depends, in a great meaſure, the internal ſtrength and perfection of the Chriſtian church, as well as her increaſe

or

or enlargement without: according to what the great apoſtle of the Gentiles teaches us, when he ſays, that Chriſt, after his aſcenſion up on high, diſtributed various gifts to men, making ſome apoſtles, ſome prophets, ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers. For what end? "For the perfecting of the "ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry, for "the edifying of the body of Chriſt, till we "all come, in the *unity of the faith, and of* "*the knowledge* of the Son of God, unto a "perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature "of the fulneſs of Chriſt." This is what we ſhould all ſeek after.

Nevertheleſs it is hardly to be expected, in this ſtate, that all Chriſtians ſhould agree exactly in every point and principle of religious belief; and the reaſon is, becauſe it is not to be expected, that they ſhould all attain to the preciſe truth in every thing, and be abſolutely free from error. We are frail, and ſhort-ſighted, and liable to miſtake, the beſt of us, though we had no prejudices, paſſions, or intereſts, to miſlead us. Nor are all mens minds formed alike, any more than their bodies. Difference of natural capacity, or gifts, difference of education and habit, difference of opportunities for acquiring knowledge, difference of ſtudy or application, all theſe, and many other circumſtances, will naturally occaſion a diverſity of ſentiments, (ſome more, and others leſs juſt), even where men follow all the ſame rule, and are all equally ſincere.

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But then the experience of all ages hath ſhown, that, upon the ſuppoſition mentioned, this diverſity is apt to take place chiefly, if not wholly, in ſuch matters as are leſs clear, leſs eaſy to be aſcertained with preciſion, and therefore comparatively of leſs importance. Nor is it inconſiſtent with the unity of the evangelical faith, while men remain all on the ſame and only foundation, which is Jeſus Chriſt, and all hold him as their head; united in a due reſpect to his divine authority, ſo fully manifeſted, and proved, by his life, preaching, and miracles, his death, and reſurrection from the dead; while they are all perſuaded of his exaltation to power at the right hand of God, and that he will come again to judge the world, and render to every man according to his works; I add, while they are all perſuaded of the mercy of God through him, and that he will give eternal life to all them, and them only, that obey him. This faith is ſufficient to conſtitute men Chriſtians, and to intitle them to all the privileges of Chriſtians; as may evidently appear from all the converſions which the ſcripture relates to have been made by the apoſtles of our Lord, while they ſpread the goſpel through the world. And in this faith moſt part, if not all Chriſtians, at leaſt in the Reformed churches, do at this day profeſs unanimouſly to agree. The grand error, and the ſource of endleſs diviſions, is, when Chriſtians profeſſing this faith in common, do not act conformably

ably to it, or will not ſuffer one another to do ſo in peace; and when quarrelling about leſſer differences of opinion, often very trifling, often lying rather in words than things, they forget to concur with God, with Jeſus Chriſt, and with one another, in promoting, to the utmoſt of their power, that holineſs, righteouſneſs, and ſolid piety, which the goſpel every where inculcates in the cleareſt manner, and under the moſt ſolemn ſanctions.—Which brings me to the

3. Third and laſt view which I mentioned, of the union ſo devoutly prayed for by Jeſus Chriſt in behalf of all that ſhould at any time become his followers; namely, an union of concord and mutual love: that as the Father is in him, and he in the Father; and as he and his Father are one, by the ſtricteſt and moſt perfect love, and by their joint endeavours (if we may ſay ſo) to carry on and complete the grand work of man's eternal ſalvation; ſo we Chriſtians alſo might be one in them, by a charity founded on the pure and ſublime principles of the goſpel. This is properly the reſult and fruit of all that I have hitherto diſcourſed of. For what was the intention of the Almighty Father in communicating his Spirit to the Son, and through him to the diſciples of the Son? what was his intention in calling them to one faith, the profeſſion and practice of one divine religion, putting them under the conduct of one heavenly Maſter, and giving them one common hope of

an incorruptible inheritance? what did he intend by these things, but that, strife and discord ceasing from amongst them, and the odious distinctions which had formerly kept them at variance being abolished, "there "might be neither Jew nor Greek, Barba- "rian, Scythian, bond, or free, but all might "be *one* in Christ Jesus?" And what did it profit them to have even the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, if they had not charity? or what availed it to be the followers of one holy doctrine, if this doctrine, instead of uniting them, was to be the source of greater dissension and animosity between them than they had ever known before? We cannot doubt, then, but it was the aim of our Saviour's intercession in part at least, if not principally, that his followers might be one in mutual love towards each other. For without this, whatever other things they might agree in, their union could by no means be complete, secure, or lasting; their union, I mean, either with him and his Father, or among themselves.

Accordingly the Apostle Paul teacheth us, that the "end of the commandment (the "scope and tendency, the sum and perfec- "tion, of the Christian institution) is chari- "ty, out of a pure heart, and of a good con- "science, and of faith unfeigned." Where these are, charity can never be wanting; and where charity is not, there can neither be undissembled faith, or a good conscience, or

a pure heart. "If we love one another," ſays the Apoſtle John, "God dwelleth in us, "and his love is perfected in us." In ſhort, this is the character by which Jeſus would have men to be known in the world for his diſciples. The diſciples of the Phariſees were known by their dreſs, their extraordinary devotions, their ſuperciliouſneſs; the diſciples of John the Baptiſt were known by their faſting, and the ſingular auſterity of their manners; the diſciples of the Heathen philoſophers were known by their attachment to the oppoſite ſyſtems and ſpeculative opinions of their reſpective maſters. Jeſus Chriſt fixes upon nothing of that kind for the diſtinctive badge of his followers. He aſſigns ſomething for it that is more uſeful and ſalutary, more agreeable to truth and reaſon, and more conducive to the real perfection and happineſs of human nature: "By "this," ſays he, "ſhall all men know that "ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to "another."

Our Lord, I ſay, prayed for this moſt excellent grace to his followers above all others, in praying for their union; becauſe this grace alone could make them truly and completely *one*. This would prevent or remove every poſſible cauſe of diſcord or diſſenſion that might ariſe among them; it would keep them conjoined in holy communion and peace, notwithſtanding unavoidable differences of ſentiment in ſome things,

and render them one compact and firm body, in which you can perceive no rent or ſchiſm, but cloſely knit together in all its parts, and edifying itſelf in love.

But we have now ſeen, according to the beſt account that I am able to give of it, from the ſcriptures of truth, what it is that Jeſus Chriſt here aſks in behalf of thoſe who ſhould believe on his name, when he prays, "That "they all may be one, as thou, Father, art "in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may "be one in us." How far this prayer has been hitherto anſwered in fact, it may not become us to ſay, though it muſt be owned, that appearances in the world at this day, and for many ages paſt, are very much againſt it. But one thing we may ſay, that if it had been anſwered in a much leſs degree than it has been, this would be no juſt argument, either againſt the propriety of the prayer in itſelf, or againſt the efficacy of our Lord's interceſſion with his Father. For it is with the anſwer of this prayer in us, my brethren, as with all the other bleſſings which the goſpel propoſeth to us: God has not made our attainment of them to depend only upon himſelf, or the mediation of his Son; were that the caſe, we would have nothing to fear, and needed not give ourſelves any trouble about them: but he has made it to depend alſo, and eſſentially, upon us; inſomuch that without the concurrence of our deſires, our prayers, and efforts for obtaining them, and making

making them ours, we can reap no benefit from them; and they are as vain with regard to us as if they had never exiſted, except only that they will increaſe the ſeverity of our condemnation.

SERMON IX.

The Subject continued.

JOHN xvii. 20. 21.

Neither pray I for theſe alone, but for them alſo which ſhall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou haſt ſent me.

WHAT ought powerfully to excite our endeavours in the preſent caſe, is the conſideration of the importance and neceſſity of this union which our Saviour prays for among his profeſſed followers, in order to engage the unbelieving world to receive the faith of his divine miſſion, or to embrace his religion:—"That the world may believe that thou haſt ſent me." This was,

II. The ſecond point that I propoſed to conſider. I ſhall ſatisfy myſelf with a brief and general illuſtration of this: "That the "world may believe that thou haſt ſent me." It is our Lord that ſays ſo, my brethren; and what Chriſtian, what lover of Jeſus, but muſt be affected with this motive? Bleſſed Jeſus! and is it ſo indeed? is there danger

ger that the world will not believe that God hath ſent thee? that after all the glorious atteſtations that have been given to thy innocence and dignity, both from heaven and on earth, they will ſtill hold thee for a falſe and wicked impoſtor? that they will approve of the council which condemned thee as a blaſphemer, and bleſs the wicked hands that nailed thee to the croſs? that they will crucify thee afreſh, and put thee to open ſhame? Above all, canſt thou be liable to ſuch treatment on account of any thing in the character and conduct of thy profeſſed diſciples? What ſhall I do, O my Lord, to vindicate thy honour? to reſcue thy worthy name, in which I muſt for ever glory, from the unjuſt reproaches of infidels? How ſhall I take away from them every pretext to juſtify their unbelief, and cauſe thee to be thought of, whereever thy name is heard, with that reſpect and veneration which is due to thee as the faithful "Meſſenger of the Moſt High, and the Anointed Lord and King of his people?" You know the anſwer, my brethren, that Jeſus Chriſt would give to ſuch pious inquirers. The text has already informed you of it. Would it not be to this purpoſe? "Be careful, my dear "friends, to live as becomes my diſciples; "and let the diſtinguiſhing mark or charac- "teriſtic of my diſciples prevail, and be con- "ſpicuous in you;—ſtudy to be *one*,—as "the Father is in me, and I in him,—to be "*one* in us;—endeavour,—ſtrive,—exhort;

"if

" if there be any conſolation in me, if any " comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the " Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, — ex- " hort and provoke one another to heavenly " union and love: ſo ſhall you perſuade the " world that I am the faithful and true wit- " neſs, and that my religion is of God."

But to ſet this matter in a clearer light, it muſt be owned, Chriſtians, that the divinity of our religion does not properly depend upon the behaviour of its profeſſors. Without regard to that, it has proofs to ſupport it which are abundantly ſufficient to convince and ſatisfy the minds of all impartial perſons who know and conſider them. But then, let the proofs of it be what they will, it is impoſſible they can produce any effect, where they are not attended to and examined without prejudice. Nor can it be reaſonably expected, that unbelievers will be very ſolicitous to know the evidences of a religion which they are yet ſtrangers to, and which they perceive to have few or no good effects upon thoſe who have already received it, and profeſs to be governed by it. No. On the contrary, this will naturally fill their minds with the ſtrongeſt prejudices, and will, in their apprehenſion, weaken, or totally deſtroy, the force of all the arguments that can be produced in favour of it. In this way it is that the manners of profeſſed Chriſtians come to be of ſo much conſequence to others, and to have ſuch a mighty influence, either in promoting or obſtructing the progreſs

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of their religion among men. Our Lord ſeems to intimate, that there is ſomething eſſential in this matter. He had already preached an excellent and heavenly doctrine, lived a ſpotleſs and exemplary life, and wrought many great miracles which could not be diſputed by thoſe who had the beſt opportunities to examine them: he was, in a little time, to ſeal the truth with his blood; to riſe again from the dead, according to his promiſe; to ſhew himſelf alive, after his paſſion, to his apoſtles and followers, who were, of all others, the fitteſt to judge of the reality of that fact; to aſcend unto heaven in their preſence; and to pour down upon them a rich variety of the moſt extraordinary gifts and powers, enabling them to ſpeak with new tongues, and to do miraculous works; all which he did faithfully perform: and yet, as if all theſe things would of themſelves be inſufficient to convince the world of his divine miſſion, he prays here for thoſe who ſhould believe in him, "That they may be one, as "thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; "that they alſo may be one in us: that the "world may believe that thou haſt ſent me."

In fact, my brethren, the general conduct and deportment of thoſe who make profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion, is naturally the firſt point relating to it that will come to be examined by ſtrangers and infidels whom it is propoſed to. This is an obvious thing, and ſtrikes at firſt ſight, and muſt always give,

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from the very nature of man, the moſt obſtinate prepoſſeſſions, either for or againſt any doctrine. All men are endowed with a ſenſe of right and wrong; and it is from the known behaviour of Chriſtians that the Heathens will form their judgement both of them and of their religion. Many men alſo, even in the midſt of Pagan ſuperſtition, have ſo much knowledge of the divinity, as to think, that, if he is at all to reveal his will to men, it muſt be with a view to make them juſt and faithful, not falſe and cruel; and to unite and cement, not to ſet them at variance.

Now let us ſuppoſe there is ſuch an one, as yet a Heathen, and enemy to our religion, but whom you would perſuade to receive it as true, and of God. He opens his eyes upon the Chriſtian world, and, inſtead of *one* grand and holy ſociety, worthy of the great God to form, and fit for him to dwell with, beholds an infinite multitude of little factions and parties, ſeparate from and oppoſite to each other, all claiming to be the only true Chriſtians, and all denying that character to every other but themſelves; unwilling to acknowledge each other for the followers of the ſame maſter; unable to bear with one another in the worſhip of God, the common Father of all; full of rancour and animoſity in their hearts, and reſtrained only by want of power from perſecuting each other, even to deſtruction. —What reflections do you imagine would naturally ariſe in his breaſt concerning the religion

ligion we profeſs, and the maſter whom we ſerve? Ah! my brethren, it muſt wound every Chriſtian heart only to think of them. He would aſk you with diſdain, Which of theſe hoſtile parties he is to inliſt himſelf with? for one or other of them, he will think, he muſt join, if he is to be a Chriſtian. But in his preſent diſpoſition, as a Heathen, he wiſhes no ill to any of his fellow-creatures who do not invade his rights; and why ſhould he involve himſelf in unneceſſary broils and quarrels? If it be alledged, that theſe wars are waged and carried on in the cauſe of Heaven, he will wonder, in the firſt place, how Heaven ſhould come to have ſo many oppoſite and contradictory cauſes to maintain at once; and then how it ſhould come to ſtand in need of the feeble efforts of human wrath and violence to aſſert its intereſts. He would aſk you, Whether Jeſus Chriſt intended to eſtabliſh *one* religion for his diſciples, or a number of different ones? If the latter was his deſign, he will ſay, he ſeems to have ſucceeded; but then, what is it you call the Chriſtian religion? If the former, how comes it to paſs that his followers are in fact of ſo many different religions? Did he himſelf underſtand what he intended to appoint? and did he know how to expreſs it? It would ſeem not, will the Heathen ſay, ſince his diſciples cannot agree in ſaying what his religion is. You call the church of Chriſt his kingdom; and you ſay, that he who is the king of it has

has all power in heaven and in earth. But while I, says the infidel, behold this kingdom so much divided against itself, I must conclude, that it is, some how or other, very ill administered; and that the head of it wants either the power or the will to reduce it to order and peace. Did he intend to sow the seeds of eternal strife and discord among men? and to set up a kingdom, wherein his subjects should always pursue opposite interests in his name, and be perpetually hating and devouring one another for his sake * ?

I forbear, my brethren, to express all the reproaches and blasphemies which the Heathen will be apt to pour out upon our holy religion, and its founder, while they see the Christian world split into such a multitude of opposite and contending parties, all intent upon each others ruin; and that, in those places † where there seems to be the greatest uniformity among them, matters are still a great deal worse; because it is not a real uniformity, but only apparent; an uniformity not owing to choice or conviction, but to the grossest ignorance and hypocrisy; supported only by the constant exertion of an oppressive worldly power, which either industriously keeps them in the dark, or else forces them to dissemble their real sentiments, and to profess outwardly what their hearts abhor.

* See a sermon of the Reverend Mr James Peirce of Exon. on 1 Cor. i. 13. † In Popish countries.

Upon

Upon the whole, will the Heathen ſay, here is a ſet of men who all profeſs to follow one maſter only in the things of religion, and yet in fact each party follows another of their own; a ſet of men who ſay they belong to one body, and yet are formed into a thouſand ſeparate bodies, which all diſclaim communion with one another; a ſet of men, in fine, whom a ſtranger would take to be all of one religion, (for they all call themſelves Chriſtians), and yet their religions, even according to their own accounts of them, are as different as light and darkneſs. What a contradiction muſt theſe Chriſtians be! and what muſt be the doctrine that inſpires them with ſuch ſentiments, and leads them to ſuch a conduct! Is it poſſible that it can deſcend from above, as they pretend?

But an intelligent Heathen, before he can be brought to attend without prejudice to the nature or evidences of our religion, will be apt to carry his inquiries into the manners of its profeſſors ſomewhat farther ſtill; and from this general view of the Chriſtian world, he will turn his eyes to the moral conduct and deportment of particular perſons; and when he finds that great numbers at leaſt, if not the bulk, of Chriſtians of all perſuaſions, and even thoſe of them who make the greateſt noiſe about their religion, are as ſenſual, as covetous, as revengeful, as treacherous and cruel, as Heathens themſelves, he will aſk, why he ſhould be deſired to embrace a religion which,

if it does not make him worſe, is not likely to make him any better than he is already? Chriſtians, he obſerves, profeſs mainly to ſeek the happineſs of another world; yet moſt of them appear to be entirely devoted to the intereſts and pleaſures of this. If any are otherwiſe minded, they are but few in compariſon, and are generally laughed at by the reſt, as fools and enthuſiaſts. In ſhort, they do not follow the principles and maxims of their own religion, which is an argument that they themſelves do not believe it. And though they affect to have great zeal for bringing others to the belief of it, and pretend to have no other view in this, but a deſire of promoting the welfare of their fellow-creatures, and of making them eternally happy; yet it is manifeſt from their conduct, that religion with them is nothing but a mere pretext to cover their baſe and ſiniſter deſigns; and that they regard it no farther than as a means of extending their empire over others, or of poſſeſſing themſelves of their treaſures.

Thus, I ſay, will Heathens and enemies argue againſt our religion from the conduct of its profeſſors; and theſe arguments will be ſo many ſtrong and invincible prejudices in their minds, ſufficient to make them deſpiſe it, and refuſe to take any further trouble in examining, either what it is in itſelf, or by what evidences its divine authority is ſupported. There have been many attempts made by Chriſtians to propagate the goſpel in foreign parts,

parts, and many ſchemes ſet on foot for the converſion of Heathens and infidels; pious, I doubt not, and well meant; but, for my part, the more I conſider the ſubject now before us, together with the hiſtory of paſt ages, the leſs hope am I allowed to entertain of the goſpel's being propagated with any great ſucceſs abroad, till once it be better propagated at home; or of ſeeing ſtrangers ſubmit willingly to the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt, whilſt it is borne with ſo bad a grace by ſo many of his pretended friends; and particularly, whilſt there is ſo little *union* among Chriſtians with regard to their common faith. Chriſtians ought to act with ſome kind of conſiſtency: they ſhould firſt ſettle and compoſe their differences amongſt themſelves, before they pretend to ſpread that "goſpel of peace" which they profeſs among foreigners: they ſhould be generally agreed what their religion is, before they undertake to teach it to thoſe who are entirely unacquainted with it: in a word, they ſhould ſhew by their actions, that they themſelves are really influenced by the faith of it, before they attempt to make others believe it. Then, indeed, we might juſtly hope for the happieſt fruits, and for greater triumphs to our religion than it hath had for many ages, but not ſooner.

If all that call themſelves Chriſtians would agree to live according to the rules of their religion, which are not leſs clear than excellent; if they would bend their chief attention

to the things in which they all agree, and which they themſelves muſt allow to be of greateſt importance, rather than to thoſe in which they happen to differ; if, inſtead of affecting to diſtinguiſh themſelves by inſolent pretenſions to orthodoxy of opinion, (which is only paying a compliment to themſelves at the expence of their brethren), they would rather ſtudy to be known by the principal and leading mark which Jeſus Chriſt hath aſſigned for his diſciples, their love one to another; finally, if each party of Chriſtians, inſtead of endeavouring to ſwallow up and deſtroy the reſt, by means of the power and policy of this world, would agree to lay aſide the little, or, if you will, the great peculiarities by which they ſtand apart from each other, and to unite upon the broad and firm baſis of the "e-"verlaſting goſpel," contained in the books of the New Teſtament, the only records of it which they allow to be of divine authority; hearkening, with one conſent, to the voice of their common Maſter, learning of him who was meek and lowly in heart, ſpeaking the truth to one another in love, endeavouring kindly to ſet each other right where they think they are wrong, but never attempting to force from others a ſubmiſſion to their ſentiments without inward conviction; not judging or cenſuring, not hurting or moleſting, one another upon account of mere differences of opinion, which, at the worſt, can be only errors in judgement, from which no man is

entirely

entirely exempted;—could we ſee this temper and ſpirit prevailing among Chriſtians, we might yet hope, that the goſpel of Chriſt would have free courſe, and be glorified in the world: the truth would get fair play; the name of Chriſt would be no longer blaſphemed among infidels on account of the ſcandalous immoral behaviour of his profeſſed followers; all prejudices againſt our religion ariſing from that quarter would be happily removed; the light of genuine Chriſtianity, ſhining before men in the lives of its profeſſors, would almoſt irreſiſtibly invite and engage them to glorify our heavenly Father; the bleſſing of God would attend their endeavours to propagate it; and this divine religion, ſeen in its native unſullied luſtre, and in its moſt ſalutary and beneficial effects, would gradually prevail over the whole earth. Then, in the emphatic language of the prophet, "ten "men out of all the nations would take hold "of the ſkirt of him that is a Chriſtian, ſaying, We will go with you; for we have "heard that God is with you *."

In this manner was the Chriſtian religion propagated in its early days; and if ſo, we have reaſon to think it will never be propagated ſucceſsfully any other way. Whilſt believers continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, praiſing God, and having favour with all the people; whilſt they

* See two ſermons of Dr Clarke on 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

were wont to assemble together with *one* accord, being of one heart and one soul, great grace was upon them all. And in those days the churches were edified in themselves; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they were multiplied also, by a numerous accession of new converts coming in every day. If strifes and contentions arose in some churches *, they never carried them so far as to renounce communion with one another; and they were prevailed upon, by farther instruction in the principles of Christianity, to lay them aside. If some corruption appeared now and then among them, who, for worldly ends, endeavoured to subvert or corrupt the Christian faith, "and would not consent to wholesome "words, even the words of our Lord Jesus "Christ, and the doctrine which is according "to godliness," they were presently shunned and discountenanced by all the friends of Jesus. Christianity in the mean time spread and flourished; and Christians were every where distinguished by their mutual love, by the reasonableness of their worship, and the purity of their manners. The converts from among the Gentiles were generally of one mind in the Christian doctrine; and though they could not but have very different sentiments in some things from the Jewish converts, having been at so wide a distance from them before; yet

* The church of Corinth, for example.

even

even these two parties united in one body under Jesus Christ, and the main controversy of them all was only with Pagans and idolaters.

But when Christians became less apprehensive of the common enemy than of one another; when they began (which was too early indeed) to adulterate the pure religion of Jesus with additions and inventions of their own, on which they laid more stress than on his words, and to turn the gospel into abstruse and barren speculation, instead of regarding it as a plain, affecting, and edifying rule of life; when the churches were no longer known by their mutual love, but by loud clamours about heresy and orthodoxy; when, from persecuted Christians, the world began to see those monstrous things called *Christian persecutors*; when human force and violence succeeded to reason and argument, in the propagation and defence of the truth, and were exerted by Christians, not only against infidels, but against their fellow-Christians; when men were to be convinced by heavy forfeitures, and by bodily pains and tortures, instead of meek persuasion and friendly debate; to conclude, when Christians would no longer allow their brethren and fellow-servants to be subject to the authority of Christ, the common Lord of them all; but would moreover compel them, by the terrors of this world, to be subject also to their authority in the things of religion: — From that time, my brethren, and

by

by these means, the body of Christ being no longer *one*, but rent in a thousand pieces, his religion declined every day. Its glory was debased, its force enervated, its very light almost extinguished. Ignorance, hypocrisy, and trifling ceremonies of human contrivance, came to take place of honesty and understanding, of solid piety and undissembled love *. Scarce any vestige of Christianity remained in the world, at least in that noble simplicity which is natural to it, except in the books of sacred scripture, which were preserved indeed, but prohibited from common use. We are, by God's blessing, delivered from that deplorable darkness and servitude; but are still, it is to be feared, a great way from Christian perfection.

These things, however, may serve, in some measure, to convince us of how much importance it is, that the professed followers of Christ be *one*, in order that the world may be persuaded of his divine mission, and engaged to embrace his religion. And we may now perceive how necessary a connection there is betwixt these two great events.

WHAT remains, then, Christians, but that, in order to obtain the inestimable benefit which Jesus Christ here prays for to us; and that we may not counteract his blessed intercession in our behalf, and deprive ourselves of all the

* See Dr Lardner's observations on the first council of Nice, in his credibility of the Gospel-History.

fruits

fruits of his mediation; that we may not be the occaſion of cauſing him to be regarded by the world as an impoſtor, and his religion as a fiction of human device; what remains, I ſay, but that we ſtrive to be like minded, and *join* our beſt endeavours to promote all Chriſtian holineſs in ourſelves and others, eſpecially *union* and love? It is not in our power indeed to *unite* all men, or to reconcile them to one another, any more than to the truth; but let us lament the diſorders which we cannot cure, and commend the cure of them to the wiſdom and goodneſs of our heavenly Father. Who knows how far the united prayers and tears of a ſingle church, animated by the Spirit of Chriſt, may go towards the benefit of the whole Chriſtian world? Above all, let us be examples of that holy *union* and peace which ought to reign among all Chriſtians; ever preſerving and cheriſhing a generous, diſintereſted, catholic ſpirit, and abounding in love one towards another, and to all men. If others differ in opinion from us, let us not judge or deſpiſe them merely on that account; but whilſt they walk by the ſame rule that we do, and their lives appear to be Chriſtian, let us ſay, "Peace be on "them, and on all the Iſrael of God" If they judge or condemn us, merely becauſe we differ from them, let us regard them rather as objects of our pity than of our reſentment: they and we both muſt appear one day before the judgement-ſeat of Chriſt.

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We are now going to celebrate that ordinance which Jesus Christ hath instituted for the remembrance of himself; and which he intended, among other excellent purposes, to be an external token of the inward cordial union and fellowship of all his disciples: "For "we being many," says the apostle, "are one "bread, and one body; for we are all par-"takers of that *one bread*." Let us perform this service with Christian dispositions; and then, though we may appear outwardly to be separated from many who are called Christians, we shall be truly *one* with all those in every communion whom Jesus Christ will acknowledge for his disciples. For whatever multitude of separate churches and communions there may be in the Christian world, it is not to be doubted but Jesus hath "his "sheep" in every fold; that is, men of a truly Christian temper and behaviour, who, though they may be at a great distance from one another with regard to place, and often are unknown to each other, are nevertheless well known to him; and who, in fact, all think the same things in the main, and are all united in promoting the great design of the gospel; which is, the knowledge of truth, and the practice of righteousness, from the hope of immortality, without regard to worldly interests. All these, where-ever they are scattered upon the face of the earth, and however different they may seem in their outward forms and modes of worship, belong to "the

"general

" general aſſembly and church of the firſt " born, whoſe names are written in heaven;" and they will all be brought together into *one* bleſſed ſociety, in that " day when Jeſus Chriſt " ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and " to be admired of all them that believe." With theſe men, my brethren, and like theſe men, let us communicate, at the ſame time that we communicate with one another; and thus truly our fellowſhip ſhall be with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt. To whom be bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON X.

The ſucceſs of the firſt publiſhers of the goſpel a proof of its truth.

By GEORGE CAMPBELL, D. D.

Preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, at Edinburgh, June 6. 1777.

1 COR. i. 25.

——*The fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men, and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men.*

PART I.

IT would ſcarcely be poſſible to conceive a new religion attended with more diſadvantageous circumſtances, than was the Chriſtian religion on its firſt appearance; and of which, conſequently, the ſucceſs in the world, would, humanly ſpeaking, be more improbable. Nothing could be worſe adapted to the prejudices that prevailed among Jews and Gentiles than its tenets: nothing could be leſs accommodated to the univerſal depravity of manners than its precepts. Both the obſcurity and the fate of its founder ſeemed alike inſuperable obſta-

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cles to the advancement of his cauſe. And as to the perſons whom, under the title of apoſtles, he ſelected to be the inſtruments of promulgating his doctrine, they were ſuch as, in the judgement of all reaſonable men, would have been ſufficient, though every other circumſtance had been favourable, to render the ſcheme abortive. Truly, therefore, may we ſay, that if this counſel or this work had been of men, it muſt have come to nought. Any one of the particulars above mentioned would have been enough to ſtifle it in the birth; how much more would all of them when combined together? But "there is no wiſdom, "nor underſtanding, nor counſel, againſt the "Lord *." His *thoughts are not* our *thoughts*, *neither are* our *ways* his *ways*. Juſtly is this divine inſtitution repreſented in the prophetic language under the emblem of *a ſtone*, ſomething at firſt to appearance inconſiderable, *cut out without hands*, not by human ſkill or dexterity, "which became a great mountain, "and filled the whole earth †." For *the fooliſhneſs of God*, as ye have it in the paſſage read to you as the foundation of this diſcourſe, *is wiſer than men, and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men*.

The apoſtle, in theſe words, is far from inſinuating that there can be any thing in the ſupreme all-perfect mind, analogous to what we underſtand by the terms *folly* and *weak-*

* Prov. xxi. 30. † Dan. ii. 34. 35.

neſs. But, by an uſual figure, he conſiders the extraordinary conduct of Providence manifeſted in this new inſtitution, under the denomination which the adverſaries were pleaſed to give it; and affirms, that the meaſures which the ruler of the world had adopted, and which to them were fooliſhneſs, would be found to have more wiſdom in them than the wiſeſt plans of human contrivance; and that the means employed by Heaven, however weak they might be reckoned, would be ſtrong enough to baffle all the moſt vigorous efforts of the ſons of earth. Nay more, however ſhallow the meaſures, and however impotent the inſtruments may be, not in appearance but in reality, when attended only by natural and ordinary means, they will prove perfectly efficacious when attended by ſuch as are ſupernatural and extraordinary. God, when he is pleaſed to interpoſe miraculouſly, can effect his purpoſe, not only without the intervention of man, but by ſuch human agency as ſeems better calculated to defeat the end than to promote it. This, we learn from the context, was, in ſeveral important reſpects, the caſe with the firſt promulgation of the goſpel.

To throw light on this doctrine, and to point out the uſe we ought to make of it, ſhall, with the aid of Heaven, be the ultimate ſcope of this diſcourſe. The argument couched in my text, and illuſtrated in the concluding part of this chapter, and the beginning of

of the next, may be thus expreſſed: "The human and natural means originally employed for the propagation of the goſpel, would, without the divine interpoſition, have proved both fooliſh and weak, and therefore utterly incapable of anſwering the purpoſe. The purpoſe was nevertheleſs by theſe means fully anſwered. Conſequently they muſt have been accompanied with the divine interpoſition, and our religion is of God, and not of man." I ſhall firſt therefore endeavour to evince the truth of the firſt propoſition, and ſhow the utter inability of the natural means employed in promulgating the goſpel, to effect the end. I ſhall next evince the truth of the ſecond, pointing out the rapid and unexampled ſucceſs of the means that were employed;—and ſhall conclude with obſerving the influence which the obvious conſequence of theſe deductions ought to have upon us, and the improvement we ought to make of this doctrine.

I BEGIN with the unfitneſs of the means, that is, the natural and ordinary means admitted by infidels, as well as Chriſtians, to have been employed; for it is of ſuch means only I am here ſpeaking. Let it be obſerved, that under this I comprehend the genius of the doctrine taught; becauſe, whether ſupernatural in its origin or not, it may have in it a natural fitneſs for engaging attention and regard; or, on the contrary, a natural ten-

dency to alienate the minds of men, and render them inattentive and averſe. In this view the ſpirit and character of the inſtitution itſelf ought to be regarded as natural means, either of promoting, or of retarding, its propagation. Let us then examine briefly the two principal circumſtances already ſuggeſted, the doctrine, and the publiſhers. It is to the former that the term *fooliſhneſs* is more eſpecially applied, as *weakneſs* is to the latter.

The doctrine of the croſs, in particular, the great hinge of all, was, in every view, expoſed to univerſal diſlike and deriſion. Conſidered as an article of faith in this new religion, as exhibiting the expiation of ſin, and conſequently as the foundation of the ſinner's hope of divine pardon and acceptance, to men principled as they were, it both ſhocked their underſtanding, and was humiliating to their pride. Conſidered as a practical leſſon, and a warning of the treatment which the diſciples might expect, when ſuch horrible things had befallen their maſter, to follow whom in ſuffering they were ſpecially called, nothing could tend more powerfully to alienate their will, being oppoſed by all their moſt rooted paſſions, love of life, averſion to pain, and horror of infamy. And even conſidered only as a memorable event in the hiſtory of him whom all the proſelytes to this inſtitution were bound to acknowledge as their lawgiver and king, it was exceedingly diſguſtful, being contradictory to all the notions to

which

which from infancy they had been habituated, in regard to the protection of Providence, and the marks whereby Heaven diſtinguiſhes its favourites deſtined for honour and authority.

Paul, accordingly, takes particular notice of the bad reception which this doctrine met with from both Jews and Gentiles, in conſequence of the inveterate prejudices entertained againſt it. *The preaching of the croſs*, ſays he, *is to them that periſh*, to them who reject and deſpiſe the goſpel, *fooliſhneſs*; *but to us who are ſaved*, who by faith give it a grateful reception, *it is the power of God* *. However much the Jews and the Greeks differed from each other, in their religious principles, as well as cuſtoms, they concurred in a moſt hearty deteſtation of this, which made ſo fundamental an article of the Chriſtian diſpenſation. They viewed it differently, according to their different national characters; but the effect, an indignant rejection, was the ſame in both. Our apoſtle, who perfectly underſtood the difference, has marked it with the greateſt accuracy. *The Jews require a ſign*, an evidence of the interpoſition of omnipotence, which may overpower their minds, and command an unlimited aſſent; *and the Greeks ſeek after wiſdom*, the elaborate productions of oratory and ingenuity, which may at once convince their reaſon, and gratify their curioſity: *but we preach Chriſt crucified*;

* 1 Cor. i. 18.

a doctrine ſo far from ſuiting the inclinations of either, that *to the Jews* it is *a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs* Both agree to reprobrate this doctrine: they differ only in the manner. To the Hebrew, it is an object of abhorrence; to the Grecian, of contempt. He adds, *but to them who are called*, thoſe who are divinely inſtructed, *both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God* *.

Nor can we juſtly wonder that ſo ſtrange a doctrine as this of the croſs, ſo repugnant to fleſh and blood, ſhould, upon the trial, prove ſo unwelcome to carnal men. If we inquire but ever ſo little into the circumſtances of the caſe, we ſhall find, that its reception could not have been any other than it was. The Jewiſh nation was at that time ſplit into ſects, which in many things entertained opinions oppoſite to one another. Nevertheleſs, all who expected the Meſſiah, of whatever ſect, concurred in the belief that he would be, what the world calls, an illuſtrious prince, a mighty conqueror, who would ſubdue kingdoms, and eſtabliſh for himſelf a new univerſal monarchy, or ſecular empire, (for of a ſpiritual kingdom they had no idea), wherein his own nation would be exalted above all the nations of the earth. From theſe ſentiments the Samaritans (however much they differed from the Jews in other reſpects) ſeem not to have diſſented; in theſe ſentiments all our Lord's

* 1 Cor. i. 22. 23. 24.

diſciples

diſciples had been brought up; and to theſe ſentiments, in ſpite of the manifeſt tendency of his inſtructions and example, they, by their own account, firmly adhered during his life, and even for ſome time after his reſurrection. Nor do they ſeem ever to have relinquiſhed theſe ſentiments, till the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, after the aſcenſion, on that memorable day of Pentecoſt, on which the promulgation of the evangelical economy may properly be ſaid to have commenced.

But it is not enough to ſay that the Meſſiah held forth to this people in the goſpel, and that which the gloſſes and traditions of the rabbis had taught them to expect, were perſonages widely different. They were, in moſt reſpects, the reverſe of one another. The people had not yet learnt, that God, though not in the tempeſt, the earthquake, nor the thunder, may yet be found in the ſmall and feeble voice. Their heads were occupied with ideas of grandeur and majeſty merely human. When they were thinking of the royal palace, their attention was called to the ſhop of the artificer. *Is not this the carpenter* * *?* ſay they, with a mixture of aſtoniſhment and contempt. Inſtead of riches and ſplendor, behold poverty and humility: for a potentate and warrior, they had only a peaceful citizen. In lieu of one whoſe undertakings were, in the ſight of all mankind, to be crowned with glory and ſucceſs, they were preſented with a

* Mark vi. 3.

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man inceſſantly haunted by misfortune from his cradle to his grave; whoſe friends were few, and enemies innumerable; one who in their eyes had nothing deſirable, or, to adopt the expreſſion of the prophet, had *no form nor comelineſs* *; one who accordingly, from his firſt appearance in public, was by all the men of power and influence, hated, derided, defamed, perſecuted, diſhonoured, and at laſt cruelly murdered. But the ſtone which the builders rejected, ſoon became the head of the corner.

Proſperity and adverſity have, in all ages, and in all nations, had ſome influence on the judgements of men, in regard to divine favour and averſion; but on no nation had theſe external things a greater influence than on the Jewiſh; and under no diſpenſation or form of religion, true or falſe, more glaringly than under the Moſaic. There was ſomething in that inſtitution, it muſt be acknowledged, which naturally led the attention to theſe outward diſtinctions between man and man. The promiſes and threatenings of the law, interpreted according to the letter, are of things merely temporal. That under theſe are couched the eternal things of the goſpel, is not to be denied; things which were alſo typified by the eſtabliſhed ceremonies and carnal ordinances. But it muſt be obſerved, that the literal is the moſt obvious ſenſe; the ſpiritual was perceived by thoſe only whoſe faith

* Iſa. liii. 2.

or

or ſpiritual diſcernment put them in a capacity of ſeeing through the veil of ſymbolical language and ritual obſervances. For it ever did, and ever will hold, that "the ſecret of "the Lord is with them that fear him *." But in regard to the generality of the people, (I may almoſt ſay the whole, the exceptions are ſo few), that outward happineſs or miſery were the ſtandard by which they determined whether a perſon were the object of the love or of the hatred of Heaven, is a fact that might be evinced, if neceſſary, from numberleſs paſſages, both of the Old Teſtament and of the New. And if this holds in regard to what may be called the general tenor of a man's life, it holds more eſpecially of his death. To be adjudged to the death of a malefactor by the ſupreme tribunal of the choſen people, they conſidered as an infallible mark of reprobation. How much more, when the very ſort of death, ſuſpenſion upon a tree, had a ſpecial malediction pronounced on it, which, as an indelible ſtigma, had been engroſſed in the body of their law? "He "that is hanged is accurſed of God †." The Jews, accordingly, to this day, diſtinguiſh our Saviour by the name of THE HANGED MAN, as the moſt diſgraceful they can employ. We cannot then wonder, that to thoſe whoſe minds were blinded through ſenſual affection and obdurate prejudices, and in reſpect of

* Pſal. xxv. 14. † Deut. xxi. 23.

whom,

whom, to adopt the apoſtle's ſimilitude *, the veil which covered the face of Moſes, too ſplendid for their weak organs, remained unremoved, (we cannot, I ſay, wonder, that to them) the Meſſiah's croſs ſhould prove a ſtumbling-block. It in reality did ſo. The undoubted fact confirms the reaſoning. And the reaſoning is, from their avowed principles, ſo unqueſtionable, as to be equivalent to the cleareſt teſtimony of the fact.

Nor were the prepoſſeſſions of Pagans leſs impregnable, though built on different grounds. Of all nations the Jewiſh was the moſt contemned and hated by both Greeks and Romans. That their contempt and hatred were unreaſonable, I readily allow. But it is only with the fact I am here concerned; and that is incontrovertible. It were eaſy, however, to account for it, from ſeveral peculiarities in the Jewiſh conſtitution, which made them be reckoned by others, ſuperſtitious, unſociable, intolerant, ſelf-opinioned, and untractable. Their refuſal of all intercommunity with thoſe of other nations in matters of religion, a thing unexampled amongſt idolaters, their diſtinction of meats unto clean and unclean, and their laws in regard to ablutions, which very much interrupted even their civil intercourſe with Gentiles, conſpired in alienating the minds of ſtrangers. Though not deficient in courage and natural ſagacity, their being but little acquainted with the arts of war and

* 2 Cor. iii. 14.

government,

government, made them appear inconſiderable in the eyes of the Romans; their ignorance of philoſophy and the fine arts rendered them deſpicable to the Grecians. It would not have been eaſy to make the people of either nation expect great benefits of any kind from a Jew. But to talk to them of ſuch a one as their Meſſiah or Saviour, that is, as the terms were explained by the preachers, the purchaſer of the remiſſion of ſins, of divine favour, of eeternal life and happineſs, nay as the perſon conſtituted by the Deity judge of all the earth, could, to men ſo ill affected to that people, hardly appear otherwiſe than as abſolutely ridiculous. How much then was the ridicule enhanced, when they were further informed, that this Meſſiah, this man of circumciſion, of the race of Jacob, had, like a common felon, and in company with common felons, ſuffered under a Roman procurator the infamous death of crucifixion?

It is not eaſy for us, at this diſtance, to enter perfectly into the ſentiments and feelings of men, whoſe manners, opinions, education, and cuſtoms, were ſo totally different from ours. It is more difficult on this ſubject, on which our minds have been ſo long pre-occupied, than on any other. The death of Chriſt, whom we venerate as our ſovereign, our high prieſt, and teacher in divine things, hath, to us Chriſtians, ennobled the croſs, the inſtrument of an event of ſuch ineffable moment to the human race. We can no longer

er behold it with the ſame eyes. It is for this reaſon, that, in Chriſtian countries, the uſe of it in puniſhing is univerſally aboliſhed. We are inclined to conſider it as too honourable a deſtiny, for any after Jeſus Chriſt, of the poſterity of Adam, to undergo. But in order to judge of the appearance and effect of a new doctrine, publiſhed in a remote period, we muſt, as much as poſſible, enter into the opinions and prepoſſeſſions that prevailed at the time. Conſidered in this view, it is but juſt to obſerve, that crucifixion was then, in the Roman empire, incomparably more diſgraceful than any kind of death known in theſe days in any part of Chriſtendom. No citizen of Rome, how atrocious ſoever were his guilt, how mean ſoever were his ſtation, though the loweſt mechanic, or the pooreſt peaſant, could be ſubjected to it. If a man was not a ſlave, as well as a criminal, it was not in the power of any magiſtrate to diſhonour him ſo far as to conſign him to ſo ignominious a puniſhment. And though the privilege of Romans did not extend to every free ſubject of the empire; ſo far did the Roman ſentiments prevail in regard to this mode of puniſhing, that it was held univerſally as in the laſt degree opprobrious. Conceive then the emotions which would naturally ariſe in the minds of ſuch people, when a man (a miſerable culprit in their account) who had been compelled publicly to ſubmit to ſo vile an execution, ſo degrading, ſo ſhocking to humanity,

humanity, was represented to them as the Son of the Most High God, and the Redeemer of the world. If to men so prepossessed as were the Jews, this doctrine could not fail to appear impious and execrable, (and for a time it did so even to the apostles); to men so prepossessed as were the Gentiles it could not fail to appear nonsensical and absurd.

Nay, it is manifest from the writings of the early apologists for Christianity, in the second and third centuries, that this doctrine continued long to be a principal matter of offence to the enemies of our religion, and was regarded by such as an insurmountable objection. They treated it as no better than madness, to place confidence in a man whom God had abandoned to the scourge of the executioner, and the indelible reproach of the cross. Yet this doctrine was, from the beginning, so far from being taught covertly by the apostles, as one would have thought that a small share of political wisdom would have suggested; it was so far from being dissembled, and palliated, that it appeared to be that particular of their religion, of which, in spite of the utter abomination it raised in others, in spite of all the obloquy it brought upon themselves, they were chiefly ostentatious. With our apostle *the cross of Christ* is a phrase in familiar use for denoting the whole of this new economy. The foes of the gospel he calls *enemies of the cross of Christ* *. To the

* Philip. iii. 18.

Corinthians, he ſays, he determined to know nothing among them, ſave *Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified* *. The offence taken againſt Chriſtianity he ſtyles, *the offence of the croſs* †. And the grand object of his glorying was what to others appeared the greateſt ſcandal, *the croſs of Chriſt* ‡. So much in general (for your time does not admit my entering into particulars) of the fooliſhneſs of the doctrine.

Let us next conſider the weakneſs of the inſtruments, the firſt miſſionaries of this new religion. What were they? We ſhould certainly think, that a truſt of this kind, requiring the moſt conſummate ſkill and addreſs to manage properly, could not, with the ſmalleſt hope of ſucceſs, be committed to any, but men, who to great natural ſhrewdneſs, and acquired knowledge, had all the advantages that reſult from being acquainted with the world, and converſant in public life. If to theſe, wealth, nobility, and authority, were added, ſo much the better. But were the firſt publiſhers of the goſpel men of this ſort? Nothing can be conceived more oppoſite. A few fiſhermen of Galilee, and ſome others of the loweſt claſs of the people, poor, ignorant, totally unacquainted with the world; without any viſible advantages natural or acquired; men who, before they received this extraor-

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. † Gall. v. 11. ‡ —— vi. 14.

dinary

dinary miſſion, had been obliged to drudge for bread within the narrow limits of a toilſome occupation, and had probably never dared to open their mouth in places where men of condition (their betters, as we familiarly expreſs it) were preſent. Such were the agents employed in effecting the greateſt revolution ever produced upon the earth. Was it in a rude and unlettered age that this religion was firſt broached? or was it only to the illiterate that its promulgators were charged to communicate it? It was at the time when Rome was in the zenith of her power; it was at the time when all the Grecian arts and ſciences ſhone forth in their meridian glory. It was then that theſe plain, unexperienced men, were commiſſioned, not cautiouſly to impart this doctrine in a whiſper, to perſons of a particular ſtamp, but to proclaim it to all indiſcriminately, as from the houſetops, to *preach the goſpel to every creature* *. Theſe lowly miniſters of Jeſus did accordingly publiſh it to the Jews in the temple and in the ſynagogues, and to the Gentiles in the forums of their cities, and in other places of public reſort. Their undaunted ſpirit and freedom, conſidering what they were, did indeed amaze their ſuperiors, and all who heard them. When the High Prieſt, and other members of the Sanhedrim, *ſaw the boldneſs of Peter and John*, in the ſpirited and perti-

* Mark xvi. 15.

nent reply they made, and perceived *that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled* *.

How different is the policy of Heaven, pardon the expreſſion, from that of earth! How truly is the matter repreſented in my context: "God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the "world, to confound the wiſe; and God hath "choſen the weak things of the world, to "confound the things which are mighty; "and baſe things of the world, and things "which are deſpiſed, hath God choſen, yea, "and things which are not, to bring to "nought things that are; that no fleſh ſhould "glory in his preſence †." The apoſtles were very ſenſible of their defects, in reſpect of natural talents, rank, and education; they knew well, that by men of faſhion, men of the world, they were counted "as the filth "of the world, and the off-ſcouring of all "things ‡." But as their zeal was kindled ſolely in behalf of the cauſe of their maſter, they never affected to conceal or extenuate theſe defects. They neither diſdainfully undervalued thoſe acquired advantages which they had not, but which were poſſeſſed by many of their antagoniſts, nor vainly arrogated to themſelves any merit from the ſucceſs that attended their preaching. Their humble language was, *We have this treaſure*, the doctrine of the goſpel, the ineſtimable riches of

* Acts iv. 13. † 1 Cor. i. 27. 28. 29.
‡ 1 Cor. iv. 13.

Chriſt,

Chriſt, *in earthen veſſels*; not veſſels of gold or ſilver, as men of eminence among the great and learned might be called, but veſſels of the very coarſeſt materials, thoſe denominated the dregs of the people, "that the excel-"lency of the power may be of God, and "not of us *."

We are apt to attend but careleſsly to the report of facts to which our ears have been long familiarized. Such is that of the low condition of thoſe who were the firſt heralds of the goſpel of peace. Beſides, to us the very title APOSTLES conveys certain ideas of reſpect and dignity, which, as it were, hide from us the meanneſs and obſcurity of their outward ſtate. In order, therefore, to rouſe our attention to this circumſtance, of the utmoſt importance to the right underſtanding of my argument, let us conſider what would be, I ſay not probably, but certainly, the effect of ſuch an attempt in our own age and nation, made by ſuch ill-provided, and, as we ſhould ſay, deſpicable inſtruments, unaided from above, in oppoſition to all the eſtabliſhed powers, religion, laws, and learning of the country. Yet we have no reaſon to believe, that our fiſhermen are, in any reſpect, inferior to the fiſhers of thoſe days on the lake of Genneſaret. It would not perhaps be difficult to prove, that, in point of education, in this part of the iſland at leaſt,

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

they are even ſuperior. But to render the parallel complete, and to make it tally perfectly with the infidel hypotheſis about the promulgation of the goſpel, we muſt conceive ſomething ſtill more marvellous; namely, that a few ſuch men in this country, ſo wretchedly accoutred, ſo unfurniſhed with human means, friendleſs and pennyleſs, unacquainted with every language but their mother-tongue, of which they can ſpeak only a provincial and barbarous dialect, form the vaſt project of traverſing Holland, France, Germany, and the other countries on the continent, in order to make converts abroad, to impoſe on all mankind, and to publiſh throughout the world, a ſcheme of doctrine they had previouſly concerted among themſelves. With the leaſt reflection we ſee the abſolute impracticability of ſuch a plan, when brought home to ourſelves. Indeed it is ſo glaringly impracticable, that it is not eaſy for us to conceive that ſuch an extravagance could ever enter into the heads of men in their ſenſes. Yet not one jot better equipped were the apoſtles, if we abſtract from ſupernatural aid, than ſuch projectors as I have now ſuppoſed. In point of language, a moſt eſſential circumſtance, they could be no way ſuperior *.

Now

* The ſpeech of the common people has always moſt of the peculiarities of the province. We have no reaſon to think that the dialect of any of the twelve was preferable to that of Peter. Yet he was detected at Jeruſalem by

Now the nature of things, my brethren, was the ſame then that it is at preſent, and means which we perceive now to be perfectly inadequate, muſt have been always ſo. I do not talk of the improbability that ſuch ſort of men ſhould, at the riſk of peace, liberty, life, and every thing valuable, and without any imaginable motive, have conceived a project ſo fantaſtic, becauſe ſo totally beyond their ſphere, as that of ſubverting all the religious eſtabliſhments on the face of the earth, of extirpating at once opinions, ceremonies, laws which had ſubſiſted for many centuries, and even whole orders in ſociety, by ſubſtituting, in lieu of all theſe, a new theory of theirs, founded in a falſe ſtory of their own deviſing. Nor do I talk of the abſurdity of imagining, as ſome have done, that men who were neither fools nor mad (and if they had been either, their ſucceſs would not have been leſs unaccountable) ſhould, in a matter entirely ſubjected to the teſtimony of their ſenſes, have impoſed upon themſelves, and thought they were promoting truth, if it was not ſo. But I talk at preſent of the impoſſibility of ſuch agents ſucceeding by natural means, in ſuch a deſign, however formed. To account for the ſucceſs therefore, we muſt neceſſarily admit the divine original of the whole, and

by a ſervant-maid, from his uncouth idiom and accent, to be a Galilean; at a time when, we may believe, he would gladly have concealed his country, by diſguiſing his tongue, if it had been in his power. Mat. xxvi. 73.

have

have recourſe to the concurrence of him who "calleth the things that are not, as though "they were *," and who alone can "deſtroy "the wiſdom of the wiſe, and bring to no-"thing the underſtanding of the prudent." With ſuch an almighty aſſiſtant, and nothing leſs will account for it, they might well be ſuperior to fear and apprehenſion, and might boldly challenge all human oppoſition, and ſay, "Where is the wiſe? where is the "ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world? "Hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of "this world †?"

But it will perhaps be urged, that the Apoſtle Paul ought to be conſidered as an exception from the general remark I have been explaining. Was not he a man of letters, bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, a famous Jewiſh doctor, and inſtructed in all the ſcriptural and traditional learning of the Jews? Nay, does it not appear, that he was not altogether unacquainted with the writings of the Grecian poets? It is indeed true; and as we judge of every thing by compariſon, ſo when he is compared with his brethren in the apoſtolate, he may be denominated *learned*. But it ought to be obſerved, that as his learning conſiſted chiefly, I might almoſt ſay ſolely, in the ſcriptures, and the rabbinical doctrine of the Phariſees, it is notorious in how little eſteem that kind of erudition was

* Rom. iv. 17. † 1 Cor. i. 19. 20.

among

among the Gentiles, of whom he was eminently the apoſtle. Of whatever account, therefore, this knowledge might have been, had his miſſion been only or chiefly to the Jews; I muſt think, it was of very little, if any at all, to the Greeks and Romans. To them all Jewiſh literature appeared no better than unintelligible, and therefore inſignificant, jargon; or, as Gallio, the proconſul of Achaia, contemptuouſly ſtyled it, "queſtions of words and names, and of their "law *." Whatever uſe Paul might have made of his learning, in diſputing with the Jewiſh doctors, it could be of no ſervice in his diſputes with the philoſophers of Greece, and the *literati* of Rome. It is remarkable, therefore, that the only man among the firſt preachers of the goſpel, who was in any degree qualified to cope with the learned men of Judea, was not ſent to them, but to nations amongſt whom his Hebraiſtic knowledge could give him no advantage. Whereas Peter, who is by way of eminence ſtyled the Apoſtle of the Circumciſion, as the other is of the Gentiles †; (Peter, I ſay), though of their own country, was but one of the untaught rabble, who, on account of the meanneſs of their birth and ſtation, as well as their ignorance, were by the haughty ſcribes and rulers accounted the refuſe of the earth. "This people," ſay they, "who know not

* Acts, xviii. 15. † Gal. ii. 7. 8.

"the

" the law, are curſed *." Nor could Paul, in reſpect of rank, claim great ſuperiority over the reſt. He was only a handicraftſman, having been bred a tent-maker; a buſineſs which he occaſionally exerciſed, for the ſupport of himſelf and his attendants, during his apoſtleſhip.

Ay but had not this man all the advantage reſulting from the Grecian arts of logic and rhetoric? Did he not ſpeak their language with elegance and purity? I know the apoſtle has had ſome ſtrenuous and well-meaning advocates, eſpecially among the moderns, not infidels, but Chriſtians, who, with more zeal than judgement, have maintained the affirmative. I am far from denying, that this eminent ſervant of our Lord poſſeſſed conſiderable talents, in reſpect of natural eloquence, depth of thought, ſtrength of reaſoning, and nervouſneſs of expreſſion. But that his Greek diction was pure and claſſical, or that in compoſing he followed the rules laid down by rhetoricians, we have the greateſt reaſon to deny. His works that are extant, do, to every able and candid judge of theſe matters, ſhow the contrary. The contrary was admitted by the beſt critics and orators among the Greek fathers, who muſt be allowed more capable of judging of propriety, fluency, and harmony, in their native tongue, than any modern can be in a dead

* John, vii. 49.

and

and foreign language *. Further, the contrary is frankly owned by the apoſtle himſelf. Nay, he inſiſts, that according to the divine counſel it muſt be ſo, this being of a piece with all the other natural means God had employed in the work. Thus he was "ſent "to preach the goſpel," as he tells us in the context, "not with wiſdom of words." Why? "Leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of "none effect †." Shall we then maintain his oratorical talents in ſpite of himſelf, and in ſpite of the irrefragable reaſon he adduces from the analogy of the divine procedure, in this whole diſpenſation? It would be paying him but a bad compliment, to extol his elocution at the expence of his veracity; for we are under a neceſſity of denying one or other. It appears, that his enemies made a handle of the rudeneſs and inelegance of his ſtyle, to injure his reputation, eſpecially at Corinth, where oratory was much in vogue. But though he vindicates himſelf from their other cenſures, he invariably admits the truth of this. "Though rude in ſpeech," ſays he, "yet not in knowledge ‡." And, "I came "not with excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſ-"dom ‖." And, "the things of God we "ſpeak, not in the words which man's wiſ-"dom teacheth **." Again, "My ſpeech, "and my preaching was not with enticing

* Such were Origen and Chryſoſtom.

† 1 Cor. i. 17. ‡ 2 Cor. xi. 6. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 1.

** —— 13.

"words

" words of man's wiſdom." He aſſigns the reaſon, the ſame in import with that given formerly, " that your faith ſhould not ſtand " in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of " God *." Speaking of their ſentiments concerning him, " His letters, ſay they, are " weighty and powerful, but his bodily pre- " ſence is weak, and his ſpeech contempt- " ible †." The power aſcribed to his letters undoubtedly refers to the ſenſe conveyed in them, and the ardour of ſpirit by which they are animated. That they did not conceive any part of their merit to be the purity or harmony of the ſtyle, is manifeſt from the latter part of the character, eſpecially when compared with what is repeatedly acknowledged in other places. Paul therefore had neither the graces of perſon, nor the ornaments of elocution, to recommend or enforce his doctrine. His language to Greek ears muſt have appeared idiomatical, not to ſay barbarous. And as his ſort of learning was but ill adapted to the people of Greece, Italy, or Aſia Minor, amongſt whom his miſſion chiefly lay, he did not poſſeſs that ſuperiority over the other apoſtles which is commonly imagined. Juſtly therefore might we apply to a Chriſtian who ſhould zealouſly aſſert the claſſic purity of our apoſtle's ſtyle, the rebuke which our Lord once gave to Peter, on an occaſion not unſimilar: " Thou ſavoureſt not the things that

* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. † 2 Cor. x. 10.

" be

" be of God, but the things that be of men *."
The weakneſs, the infirmity, or, if you will, the inſufficiency of theſe meſſengers of the new covenant, was their glory, and their boaſt. Their motive was, " that the power of Chriſt " might reſt upon" them †, and be manifeſted by them. To men of the world, indeed, the doctrine appeared not more fooliſh, than the miniſtry was weak.

* Mat. xvi. 23. † 2 Cor. xii. 9.

SERMON XI.

The Subject continued.

1 COR. i. 25.

——*The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

PART II.

I HAVE now, as I purposed in the first place, shown the inability of the natural means employed in promulgating the gospel, to effect the end.

I PROCEED to consider, secondly, the rapid and unexampled success of the means that were employed. As to the rapidity of the success, need I use many words to evince a point so evident, and so universally acknowledged? The canon of scripture was not finished, that generation had not passed, when Jesus Christ had disciples and churches in Judea, Samaria, Syria, Phenicia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, the countries of Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, Egypt, and as far as Ethiopia. This we learn, partly from the books of the New Testament, partly from the authentic remains of the apostolic fathers. Whilst the faith of the

the goſpel was deeply rooted in all thoſe who profeſſed it; whilſt nothing but faith could induce any one to make the profeſſion; whilſt the profeſſors themſelves were haraſſed on every ſide with the moſt violent perſecutions, —the church of Chriſt, in ſpite of all oppoſition, and every ſpecies of diſcouragement, increaſed daily. In leſs than three centuries, for I reckon not from the birth of Chriſt, but as in a computation of this kind we ought to reckon from the firſt publication of the goſpel at Jeruſalem on the day of Pentecoſt, (in leſs than three centuries), Chriſtianity having pierced into Gaul, Spain, Britain, and the African countries lying on the Mediterranean, became the predominant religion of the Roman empire, which comprehended the greater and better part of the then known world. Nor was its extent limited by the empire. It did indeed, with wonderful celerity, overſpread the moſt populous countries in Europe, Aſia, and Africa. Since its eſtabliſhment by human laws, it hath been put on ſo different a footing, and the methods taken for propagating it, have been, on ſome occaſions at leaſt, ſo completely altered, and ſo little warranted by the ſpirit and precepts of that religion, that the ſucceſs or want of ſucceſs of theſe methods can hardly affect our preſent argument.

Now, as it is admitted on all hands, that the ſucceſs of the firſt preachers of the goſpel was great and rapid, I maintain that it ſtill

remains unexampled. I do not mean to ſtate a compariſon between converſion and conqueſt; between ſubduing the mind by perſuaſion, by what our apoſtle emphatically calls *the fooliſhneſs of preaching* *, and conquering the body by the ſword. In the one, both the reaſon and the will are gained by teaching; in the other, a feigned aſſent is ſometimes extorted by violence, and maintained by terror. It does not therefore in the leaſt concern my argument, what the ſucceſs was of the Mahometan, I ſay not doctrine, but arms. Their engine was war, not preaching. The weapons of their warfare were carnal, thoſe of the goſpel ſpiritual. Their aim was ſubmiſſion, not belief; the external profeſſion of the mouth, not the internal conviction of the underſtanding. When the like methods came to be adopted by Chriſtians, (for too ſoon, alas! they were adopted, a ſure ſign that the religion of Jeſus was then groſsly corrupted and debaſed), the ſucceſs is doubtleſs to be accounted for in the ſame manner. Every candid perſon will admit, that the ſucceſs of Charlemaign over the Saxons, is no more an evidence of divine favour, than that of Mahomet over the Arabs.

But when all attempts of this kind are ſet aſide, one will perhaps be at a loſs what to bring into compariſon with the firſt promulgation of the goſpel. It is not, however, for want of numerous and repeated trials, even

* 1 Cor. i. 21.

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in the way of preaching; but when the effect is inconſiderable, or not correſpondent to the expectation raiſed, the attempt itſelf comes gradually to be either quite forgotten, or little minded. Cruſades, wars, and maſſacres, have not been the only methods employed by Rome, not over-ſcrupulous about the means, when the advancement of the hierarchy, that is, the extenſion of her empire, is the end. She knows how to employ preachers, as well as inquiſitors, executioners, and ſoldiers. Nay, it is no more than doing her juſtice to acknowledge, that no church whatever, no ſtate, no ſociety, hath done half ſo much in this way as ſhe hath done. But with what effect? Has there appeared, in any part of the world, even where her miſſionaries have been moſt numerous, any fruits of their miſſions which bear a reſemblance to the fruits ſo quickly produced every where by the apoſtles of our Lord? Let the moſt ſanguine votaries of that church, who know any thing of the matter, ſay ſo, if they dare.

What then is the reaſon of the difference? Had the latter, the apoſtles of our Lord, any advantages (obſerve I ſpeak of human and natural advantages) which the former, the Popiſh miſſionaries, had not? Quite the reverſe. Every ſuch advantage has been on the ſide of the miſſionary, not one on the ſide of the apoſtle. They are not ignorant artificers of the loweſt claſs whom Rome engages in ſuch a buſineſs. She hath too much worldly

wiſdom (notwithſtanding her arrogant and not very conſiſtent pretence to miracles) ever to employ ſuch meſſengers. Neither do her apoſtles go without the utmoſt preparation, that not only a learned education, according to the times, can give them, but ſuch particular inſtructions, ſtudy, and diſcipline, as will ſerve beſt to qualify them to accommodate themſelves to thoſe to whom they are ſent, to gain upon the people, and to bear with fortitude the difficulties and hardſhips they may be obliged to encounter. It is plain, therefore, that ſhe puts no confidence in her ſupernatural powers, and acts preciſely as though ſhe were conſcious ſhe had none. Indeed, ſince the eſtabliſhment at Rome of the congregation *de propaganda fide*, no attention, no pains, no expence, have been ſpared, that could ſerve for procuring all neceſſary information, in regard to the languages, arts, manners, and cuſtoms, of the different nations and tribes to whom it is judged proper to ſend preachers; that they may be furniſhed, as much as poſſible, with every human and natural aſſiſtance for the work in which they are engaged. Yet what has been the ſucceſs hitherto? If one were to judge by the exaggerated accounts that have ſometimes been given by the miſſionaries themſelves, we ſhould think them wonderful indeed. But if we judge by the more impartial repreſentations given by others, or by, what is ſtill a better criterion, the remaining effects

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of their miſſions, we muſt pronounce them inconſiderable. In many places there is not now a veſtige of their labours. In other places, the traces that have been left are, I may ſay, equivocal, as well as few. Father Charlevoix, one of their own people, in his account of the North-American ſavages, obſerves, that the miſſions had been very unſucceſsful among them; and, what is more ſurpriſing, mentions one miſſionary, who had ingratiated himſelf ſo far with one of their tribes, that they would even have choſen him for their chief, who nevertheleſs had not been able to perſuade one ſingle perſon among them to embrace Chriſtianity *.

Well, but if the attempts have not proved ſo ſucceſsful in the Weſt, what wonders in the way of converſion have not been performed by a Saint Francis Xavier and his aſſociates in the Eaſt? Indeed there is no man in theſe latter ages who has been ſo much, and I believe ſo deſervedly, celebrated for his labours in this way, as this friar, whom Rome hath dignified with the title of *the Apoſtle of the Indies*. He was certainly a moſt zealous promoter of a cauſe which he doubtleſs believed to be the cauſe of God. His pious intentions deſerve the commendation of thoſe who can pity his errors and abſurdities. Regard to the voice of conſcience, even though a miſinformed conſcience, is ſtill reſpectable. But is it not well known, that this famous miſſiona-

* Letter xxxi.

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ry was not only a man of learning, the beſt that was then to be had, but, along with his companions, acted under the auſpices of the viceroy of Goa, the metropolis of the Portugueſe ſentlements in India? and where, for the greater ſecurity of the faith, they ſoon thought proper to eſtabliſh the inquiſition. Is it not evident, that in moſt places where the miſſionaries exerciſed their function, they were under the protection of the victorious fleets and armies of the King of Portugal? And even where theſe had not reached, the terror of their name had reached, and was of no little ſervice to theſe itinerant teachers. How unlike the caſe of the poor fiſhermen of Galilee! Miracles indeed, ſtupendous miracles, were pretended to by them, and thoſe of their party. For we have only the repre-preſentations of one ſide. It is ſurpriſing they were ſo often at a loſs for one miraculous power, the gift of tongues, ſo common in the primitive church, which would have been of greater ſervice to them than all the reſt together. This however they laudably ſupplied the beſt way they could, by the uſe of interpreters, as well as by ſtudy and application.

An eminent French preacher of the laſt century has affirmed, in a panegyrical ſermon on this apoſtle of the Pope, that he ſpread the light of the goſpel through more than three thouſand leagues of country, and ſubjected no leſs than fifty-two kingdoms to Jeſus Chriſt.

Chriſt. Theſe are big words: but where, I pray, is that country? and where are thoſe kingdoms? This is rather too violent an hyperbole, even for an orator. The conqueſts made by the Portugueſe arms, in like manner as thoſe made ſince by other European powers, Proteſtant as well as Popiſh, are not ſurely to be called kingdoms converted by preaching the goſpel. Yet, abſtracting from theſe ſettlements, or, if ye will, uſurpations, it would be difficult to point out ſo much as one of thoſe fifty-two kingdoms ſubdued to Chriſt. Of the ſame kind is that other aſſertion in the ſame diſcourſe, that Xavier has more than repaired in the Eaſt all the hurt done to Rome by Luther, and Calvin, and the other reformers (hereſiarchs, as he terms them) in the Weſt. Can there be a clearer demonſtration of the little regard that is due to the word of a panegyriſt and partyman? At this day, even in the Eaſt, thoſe reformers have more diſciples than Rome has. But, alas! it is not by what the apoſtle calls *the fooliſhneſs of preaching* that diſciples have been gained there to either ſide. The greater part have been tranſplanted from Europe, or are the deſcendents of thoſe who were firſt tranſplanted thither. The reſt are the effects more of conqueſt than of converſion.

But what ſhall be ſaid of the wonderful ſucceſs of Xavier in the iſlands of Japan? It was indeed as ſignal as it has proved tranſitory. Nothing could be more promiſing than the

the appearances were for ſome time. But there was a latent ſeed of corruption in the doctrine which thoſe miſſionaries unknowingly miſnamed the goſpel, that, ſpringing up, produced a plentiful crop of its ordinary fruits, pride, ambition, violence, and faction. Theſe provoked a perſecution, which quickly terminated in the total extinction of that infant church. Francis Solier, a Jeſuit, who writes the eccleſiaſtic hiſtory of Japan, expreſſes his aſtoniſhment, that God ſhould have permitted the blood of ſo many martyrs to be ſhed, without ſerving (as in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity) as a fruitful ſeed for producing new Chriſtians. But this can be no matter of wonder to the intelligent believer. The truth is, the cauſe was not more different at that time, (though under the ſame name), from what it had been, than were the uſual methods by which it was propagated. "The Chriſtianity of the ſixteenth century," ſays a late writer, "had no right to hope for "the ſame favour and protection from God, "as the Chriſtianity of the three firſt centu- "ries. The latter was a benign, gentle, and "patient religion, which recommended to "ſubjects ſubmiſſion to their ſovereign, and "did not endeavour to raiſe itſelf to the "throne by rebellion. But the Chriſtianity "preached to the infidels of the ſixteenth "century was far different. It was a bloody, "murtherous religion, that had been inured "to ſlaughter for five or ſix hundred years.

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" It had contracted a very long habit of main-
" taining and aggrandizing itſelf by putting
" to the ſword all that reſiſted it. Fires, ex-
" ecutions, the dreadful tribunal of the in-
" quiſition, cruſades, bulls exciting ſubjects
" to rebellion, ſeditious preachers, conſpira-
" cies, aſſaſſinations of princes, were the or-
" dinary methods employed againſt thoſe who
" refuſed ſubmiſſion to its orders *." The ingenuous confeſſion of a Spaniard, more honeſt, it would appear, than wiſe, may be pleaded in juſtification of the ſanguinary precautions taken by the Emperor of Japan. Being aſked by the King of Toſſa, one of the Japaneſe iſles, and probably one of the fifty-two kingdoms mentioned by Bourdaloue, How the King of Spain got poſſeſſion of ſo great an extent of country in both hemiſpheres? he anſwered frankly, That he uſed to ſend friars to preach the goſpel to foreign nations; and that, after having converted a conſiderable number of Heathens, he ſent his forces, who, joining with the new converts, conquered the country. The Chriſtians in that iſland (ſuch Chriſtians as they were) paid dear for this indiſcreet confeſſion. Poor then, if we may judge by the preſent effects, has been the ſucceſs of their miſſions among barbarians. Have they ſucceeded better in civilized nations? Their miſſions in China, it is true, have ſubſiſted for centuries. But will the can-

* General Dictionary, Article *Japan*, Note E.

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did and judicious, even of that communion, ſay, that the conſequences have been proportioned to what might have been expected from the aſſiduity, labour, and expence bebeſtowed on them? Moſt Roman Catholics themſelves conſider the greater part of the Chineſe proſelytes, as more than half Pagans ſtill. What will Proteſtants then reckon them?

I know not any thing done by Romaniſts in modern times, that appears more favourable, than what has been effected by ſome Jeſuits in the inland parts of South America in the country called *Paraguay*. But of this, I am afraid, we have not yet ſufficient knowledge to enable us to form a judgement that can be depended on. Some things, however, will deſerve our notice, that we may be ſatisfied that there is no ſimiliarity in this caſe to the primitive publication of the goſpel. In the firſt place, thoſe Jeſuits are to be conſidered more as the founders of a polity than as the publiſhers of a religion. Religion indeed makes an eſſential part of their eſtabliſhment; ſtill it is but a part. Nothing could be more oppoſite to the conduct of the apoſtles, whoſe ſole object was to preach the doctrine and law of Chriſt, and, without interfering in the leaſt with the rights of civil governors, to bring men every where to the obedience of the faith. I obſerve, ſecondly, that inſtead of thoſe poor, illiterate, and obſcure men, who firſt promulged to the world the everlaſting

goſpel

goſpel of the Son of God, we have here ſome ſelect members of an opulent, learned, and political ſociety, who were careful to be previouſly inſtructed in the language, manners, and religious obſervances of the people whom they were to teach; men who had moſt attentively ſtudied the policy of the ancient South-American ſtates, particularly of the Incas of Peru, and the arts they had ſucceſsfully employed in ſubduing the ferocity of their neighbours. I obſerve, thirdly, that it was more by inſinuation, and indirectly, than by open and profeſſed teaching, that the knowledge of Chriſtianity was introduced by them. Their direct and only object long appeared to be to teach thoſe ſavages agriculture, the moſt neceſſary manufactures, the art of building, and the other arts moſt conducive to civilization; and when in this way they had ſufficiently recommended themſelves to their confidence, to take occaſion of inculcating, eſpecially on the children intruſted to their care, their religious principles. The method of the apoſtles was much ſhorter; they did not find the leaſt neceſſity for ſuch artificial management.

Nor was it only in South America that the Popiſh miſſionaries found it convenient to recur to theſe arts. Of how much conſequence it has been for promoting the ſucceſs of the Chineſe miſſion, that thoſe charged with it were able mathematicians, aſtronomers, geographers, phyſicians, and natural philoſo-

phers; and how much their knowledge in the ſciences conduced to procure them the attention and reſpect of the natives, all the world knows. Where was the man of theſe modern apoſtles, who could ſay, as the Apoſtle Paul, the poor Hebrew artiſan, did to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know any thing "among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him "crucified?" Short, we may believe, would have been their abode in China, and in other places too, had they proceeded on this plan. But Paul needed not to depend on any human ſupplements or aſſiſtances whatever. No two things indeed could be more unlike, or rather greater contraſts, in all reſpects, than the firſt ambaſſadors and the laſt, thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt and thoſe of the Roman Pontiff. The laſt were poſſeſſed of thoſe accompliſhments which preſerved them from appearing deſpicable to any; the manifeſt ſuperiority of their knowledge in the elegant, as well as in many of the uſeful arts, made them be reſpected as almoſt a ſuperior order of beings, even by thoſe whom they could not perſuade to turn Chriſtian. The firſt, on the contrary, on account of their low rank, and ignorance of the arts of civilized life, were acknowledged to be, in many reſpects, but weak and contemptible inſtruments, even by thoſe who were converted by their miniſtry. This was evidently the caſe of him who of them all had the beſt pretenſions to knowledge and education. Not to mention the pageantry, e-

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ven the rich ſacerdotal veſtments uſed by the Romiſh clergy in their worſhip are naturally fitted to make an impreſſion on the ſenſes, not only of barbarians, but of the weak and ſuperſtitious even of poliſhed nations. How different muſt the ordinary and homely garments of the primitive preachers have appeared, worn conſtantly in their peregrinations! for they were not permitted to carry with them ſo much as a change of raiment *. Nor is this ſo trivial a circumſtance as to ſome perhaps, on a ſuperficial view, it will appear. Yet after all, with every human and natural advantage, what have been the fruits of the laſt labourers compared with thoſe of the firſt? Have we not gotten ample reaſon, in this view alſo, to adopt the apoſtle's words, and, on contraſting Chriſt's humble delegates to the accompliſhed ambaſſadors of Rome, to ſay, "Where, now, is the wiſe? where is "the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this "world? Hath not God made fooliſh the "wiſdom of this world? For God hath cho- "ſen the fooliſh things of this world to con- "found the wiſe, the weak to confound the "mighty, the baſe and the deſpiſed, yea and "things that are not to bring to nought things "that are, that no fleſh ſhould glory in his "preſence. For the fooliſhneſs of God is "wiſer than men, and the weakneſs of God "is ſtronger than men." If riches and learn-

* Matth. x. 10. Luke, ix. 3.

ing, and the moſt refined policy, with the countenance and ſupport of the ſecular powers, cannot, though combined, accompliſh what, in oppoſition to all theſe, is effected with eaſe by poverty and illiterate ſimplicity, can we heſitate a moment in pronouncing, *This is the finger of God.*

I PROCEED, in the *laſt* place, to the improvement we ought to make of the doctrine now explained.

The *firſt* uſe it points to, is to ſtrengthen our faith in the divine original of the holy religion we profeſs. This is the immediate concluſion of the premiſſes I have been illuſtrating and ſupporting. For if there was an utter inability in the natural means employed in propagating the goſpel, without divine interpoſition, to effectuate the end; if the end nevertheleſs has by theſe means been effectuated in a way which no human and natural advantages whatever could emulate, it muſt have been accompanied by divine interpoſition. Our religion is therefore of God, and not of man.

If we do not enjoy the advantage of being eye-witneſſes of preſent miracles, we have ſufficient evidence of thoſe performed in ancient times. We have not only the ampleſt and moſt unexceptionable teſtimony that they were performed, but we have ſo many and ſo remarkable conſequences of the performance, as it is utterly impoſſible for us otherwiſe

wiſe to account for. Nor is this a modern view of the matter, ariſing, as might be ſuppoſed, from our ignorance, and the diſtance of that period. It is, on the contrary, a very ancient and ſtriking argument, and ſeems from the firſt ceaſing of miraculous powers, to have affected every judicious and reflecting Chriſtian. Obſerve how Auguſtine, who lived about fourteen hundred years earlier than we, and who had good occaſion to know what the effects of the apoſtolic labours had been, argues with the infidels of his day from the ſame topic. "If," ſays he, "ye will "not believe the miracles of the apoſtles, ye "muſt at leaſt believe this miracle, that the "world was, by ſuch inſtruments, without "miracles, converted." This was, in his judgement, as it is, for the reaſons I have aſſigned, alſo in mine, more incredible, or, if ye will, more miraculous, than all the miracles which the goſpel requires us to believe. I repeat it, the reality of the ſupernatural facts recorded in holy writ, is the only plauſible, the only rational account that can be given of the effects produced, both on the firſt propagators of the faith themſelves, and on their hearers, Jews and Gentiles of all denominations. On every other hypotheſis, at every ſtep I advance, I meet with difficulties inſurmountable. To ſay, that thoſe poor, ſimple, unbred, ignorant, timid men, purpoſely deviſed ſo unfeaſible an impoſture, and, wretchedly ill-provided as they were for ſo

deſperate an interpriſe, attempted at all riſks to perſuade the world, on their word, to receive it, is to me an abſurdity equal to any that can be found in the moſt legendary performance. I do not find it one jot more admiſſible, to affirm, that they had previouſly impoſed upon themſelves, and believed the falſehoods they advanced. No enthuſiaſm, no fanaticiſm, nothing leſs than inſanity, will account for ſuch deluſion, in a matter, not of opinion or ſpeculation, but (as it was to them) of ſenſe, of ſight and feeling. And if to all their other diſadvantages, they were really inſane or frantic, their ſucceſs will, if poſſible, be ſtill more wonderful. Such is the misfortune of the infidel ſolutions of this matter, that if you attempt to lighten any part of their ſcheme of thoſe weights that oppreſs it, you are ſure to lay a heavier load on ſome other part. And indeed, without the addition of madneſs or idiocy, the ſucceſs of ſuch men in ſuch an undertaking, ſuppoſing no interpoſal of Heaven, requires a greater ſhare of credulity to admit, than will be found requiſite in a reaſonable Chriſtian.

God hath not, in reſpect of revealed, any more than in reſpect of natural religion, left himſelf without a witneſs. Sufficient evidence has been and will be always given. But different ſorts of evidence ſuit the different ſtages of the church. Viſible miracles were proper, they were even neceſſary, to atteſt a revela-

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tion pretending to be from God; an event really miraculous, but needing atteſtation, becauſe not ſenſibly ſo to thoſe who did not receive it immediately from Heaven. The fruits produced by the miracles then wrought, and which, on every other ſuppoſition but the truth of the miracles, are totally inexplicable; and the fulfilment of prophecies then given, which we may call intelligible, if not palpable, miracles, are the evidences that ſuit more the maturity of the church. The intrinſic evidence ariſing from the nature and genius of the diſpenſation itſelf, belongs alike to every period. Things are better balanced than we imagine. In the third and fourth centuries they had a nearer, and therefore doubtleſs a diſtincter view of the amazing ſucceſs which had attended the firſt preaching of the goſpel, notwithſtanding all the diſadvantages the preachers laboured under. But then they could not know ſo well from experience as we of later ages may, that it is not in the power of all human talents, natural and acquired, though combined together, to produce a parallel to that ſucceſs.

Let us not therefore fancy ourſelves excuſed in our unbelief, or diſobedience, becauſe we have not preciſely that ſort of evidence which others had. If we reſiſt ſufficient evidence, we are equally culpable with thoſe who were regardleſs of all the proofs, thoſe demonſtrations of the Spirit and of power, that were given by our Lord and his apoſtles.

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If we do not enjoy the advantages of thoſe of that age, we do not labour under their diſadvantages, which are more conſiderable than we perhaps are aware of. Such are the inveterate prejudices which their education had infuſed, in direct oppoſition to the doctrine, and the contempt, nay even the ridicule, which the paltry appearance (as in the language of the world we ſhould term it) of thoſe heavenly ambaſſadors could not fail to create. Theſe things tend more to preclude attention and inquiry than men are apt to think. It is with the underſtanding, the eye of the mind, as with the bodily eyes. However good they are, and however ſtrong the light may be, they will never perceive that from which they are always turned.

I OBSERVE, *ſecondly*, That from any thing hitherto advanced we cannot juſtly infer the inutility of human learning in the cauſe of religion. It was for a ſpecial reaſon, and in ſingular circumſtances, that God was pleaſed to reject the uſe of it in the firſt promulgation of the goſpel. When this new diſpenſation was uſhered into the world, that its origin might be no wiſe equivocal, the aid of power, riches, learning, and oratory, which have great influence on the minds of men, was abſolutely rejected; the very reverſe were choſen in the inſtruments God ſaw meet to employ, weakneſs, poverty, ignorance of the world, and of the arts and ſciences; that

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no conſiderate perſon might be at a loſs to what to aſcribe the effects produced; that the excellency of the power, to the conviction of every impartial ſpectator, might be of God, and not of man. There was a time, and a time of great danger too, it was in the reign of Jehoſhaphat, when God by his prophet commanded his people not to be diſmayed, or even to fight for the common ſafety; telling them, that the battle was God's; that they needed only to ſtand ſtill, and ſee the ſalvation of the Lord with them *. In like manner, when God delivered Iſrael from the Midianites, by the hand of Gideon, of an army of thirty-two thouſand he permitted only three hundred to go to battle, and with ſo ſmall a force totally routed an innumerable hoſt of aliens †. But neither of theſe caſes was according to the uſual procedure of Providence. On all ordinary occaſions it was the expreſs command of Heaven to all that were capable, to fight for their brethren, their ſons, and their daughters, their wives, and their houſes, remembering the Lord, who is great and terrible, and confiding in him ‡. It is only in extraordinary caſes (ſuch as the firſt promulgation of the goſpel) that the ordinary means are diſpenſed with. Theſe are in part the talents which God requires us to lay out in his ſervice.

* 2 Chron. xx. 14. &c. † Judg. vii. 1. &c.
‡ Neh. iv. 14.

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There have been ſome who, without attending to the peculiarity of the caſe, have raſhly concluded from ſome expreſſions in the New Teſtament, that learning of every kind is rather an obſtruction than a help in propagating religion. But on this topic they preſerve no uniformity in their manner of arguing. Who will deny, that we ought to ſtudy the language of foreigners, before we attempt to inſtruct them? Yet this branch of learning was as much ſuperſeded by the gift of tongues, ſo common in the apoſtolic church, as the other branches were by the other ſupernatural gifts. And they were all ſet aſide for the ſame reaſon; not a natural unfitneſs, but, on the contrary, a natural *fitneſs*, for attracting reſpect, and producing perſuaſion; ſince, in conſequence of this fitneſs, the effect might erroneouſly be aſcribed to them; and the miraculous interpoſition of Heaven, to which alone it ought to be attributed, might be excluded or overlooked. In that ſingular caſe, the battle was God's peculiarly. The people were to ſtand ſtill, and ſee his ſalvation. Nothing was to be done but by particular direction. Now he chuſes to operate by the intervention of natural means, and commands us to quit us like men, aſſiduouſly to exert every talent that may with probability be profitably employed in this ſervice. The common reply, though true, is not ſatisfactory, That human learning has by miſapplication been greatly abuſed in matters

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of religion: for what talent is there that has not been abuſed and miſapplied? But if, on account of the abuſe, we were to renounce the uſe of a thing in itſelf good, all means whatever ought to be laid aſide. Even preaching, than which nothing has been more abuſed, muſt be given up for ever.

Let it not be imagined, that what was ſaid in regard to the uſe made of arts and ſciences by the Popiſh miſſionaries, was with a view to condemn or diſcredit ſuch expedients. It was only with an intention to ſhow, that there were many cauſes to which the ſucceſs of thoſe miſſionaries, comparatively little, might be attributed, without recurring to miracles; whereas there was nothing that could account for the aſtoniſhing ſucceſs of the apoſtles, in whom all thoſe advantages were wanting, but miracles alone. It was not to depretiate the wiſdom of man, but to ſhow that the fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer. So far from condemning the Roman Catholics in this, I approve, I applaud their zeal, their ſolicitude, their perſeverance. I only regret they are ſo much miſtaken in the object; and that it is not for the ſimple truth as it is in Jeſus, that theſe qualities are exerciſed. I exceedingly regret, that it has fared with the goſpel in their hands, as it did with the Moſaic law in the hands of the ſcribes and Phariſees; that the precepts and gloſſes of men have corrupted and diſfigured the word

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of God; and that the traditions of the Romiſh, as formerly of the Jewiſh rabbis, have, in many inſtances, rendered the divine commandment of none effect. If our induſtry were equal to theirs, we might well expect ſuperior ſucceſs from the ſuperiority of our cauſe. Let us not heſitate to take example in what is praiſe-worthy from thoſe whom in other reſpects we diſapprove. Our Lord did not ſcruple to recommend to his diſciples, as a leſſon of prudence, the provident care even of an unfaithful ſteward: "For the chil-" dren of this world," ſays he, "are in " their generation wiſer than the children " of light *." The Romaniſts claim the high prerogative of working miracles; yet they purſue ſuch politic meaſures as ſhow that they lay no ſtreſs upon that privilege. There are, on the other hand, enthuſiaſts, who, though they do not in words arrogate ſupernatural power, act as if they poſſeſſed it, treating with contempt the ordinary and natural means. Both are in extremes. And I ſhall only ſay of them, that if the latter ſpeak with more honeſty, the former act with more judgement.

Still however we are to be underſtood with this limitation, that the means employed muſt never be repugnant to the unalterable rule of truth and right, or to the ſpirit of that holy

* Luke, xvi. 8.

religion

religion which we desire to propagate. A good end will never sanctify bad means. Men have too often, in the cause of God, as they pretended, had recourse to deceit and violence. These unhallowed instruments, so contradictory to the precepts, and so subversive of the spirit of the gospel, they have thought they consecrated, by christening them *pious frauds*, and *wholesome severities*. Let us ever remember, that it is impossible that the God of mercy and truth should accept such detestable offerings: "Thou shalt destroy them that speak "leasing," says David. "The Lord will abhor "both the bloody and the deceitful man *."

I OBSERVE, *thirdly*, and I conclude with it, that though in these days no missions can hope for success comparable to that which attended the ministry of the apostles, this consideration ought not to discourage such attempts, or lessen the ardour of Christians for the advancement of the gospel. It was fitting that the ministry of the Son of God, and of his select servants, by whom the foundations of the church were laid, should be signalized by the most glorious manifestations of divine presence and agency. This was to serve to all future ages as a proof that the commission came from God. But let it not be suspected by any, that God will ever fail to countenance the cause of his Son, the

* Psal. v. 6.

cauſe of truth and virtue, and to honour thoſe with his approbation who exert themſelves to promote it. For one to ſay, 'Be-
'cauſe I cannot do good equal to that
'which with the aid of miracles the firſt
'preachers of the goſpel did, I will do none
'at all,' would be talking neither like a Chriſtian, nor like a reaſonable perſon. The great and the rich have it in their power to be more extenſively uſeful to their fellow-creatures than the ignoble and the poor: are the latter therefore exempted from being as uſeful as they can? God requireth of every man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not *. Will it be a good apology for the ſervant who receives one talent, to ſay, 'Becauſe I re-
'ceived not, like ſome others, five talents,
'I thought it unneceſſary to employ myſelf
'in the improvement of ſo ſmall a ſtock?' The caſe of individuals, and that of whole generations, is in this reſpect ſimilar. To do what we can to diffuſe the light of the goſpel, and communicate the benefits thereof to others, is what every motive of piety to God and benevolence to men requires of us. And we may ſay, with the greateſt juſtice, that none deſerve better of mankind, than thoſe whoſe labour and wealth are employed in promoting the intereſt of their fellow-creatures, the moſt valuable for time and for eternity. For this reaſon, the diſ-

* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

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ciples of Jeſus will entertain a due veneration for that truly Chriſtian and truly Patriotic Society, who have honoured me with their commands to addreſs you on this occaſion. Their aſſiduous attention has long been fixed, and by the bleſſing of Heaven has not been fixed in vain, on the moſt ſublime and important of all objects, the extenſion of the kingdom of Meſſiah, and the ſalvation of the ſouls of men. I ſpeak not thus to convince you of the juſt title they have to your eſteem. This is a very ſmall matter to thoſe who ſeek not the praiſe of men, but that which cometh from God, the omniſcient and unerring Judge. But I ſpeak to awaken the ſame zeal in the breaſts of you, my hearers, and to excite every one of this aſſembly, to co-operate to the utmoſt of his power, in promoting the ſame noble ends.

And let us all add fervent prayers to ſtrenuous and virtuous endeavours. "Pray," ſaid David *, "for the peace of Jeruſalem." Our Jeruſalem is the church of Chriſt, the antitype of that metropolis, the true city of the great King. Of HER we may juſtly ſay, "They ſhall proſper that love THEE. Peace "be within THY walls, and proſperity with-"in THY palaces! For *our* brethren and "companions ſakes *we* will ſay, Peace be with-"in THEE. Becauſe of the houſe of the "Lord our God, *we* will ſeek THY good."

* Pſal. cxxii. 6. &c.

SERMON XII *.

The sufferings of Christ compared with those which fall out in life to other men, with a suitable improvement of the subject.

By JOHN OGILVIE, D. D.

LAM. i. 12.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

IN the melancholy book of which the text makes a part, we behold one of those objects by which the human heart is most powerfully impressed; — a good man mourning over the ruins of his country; and struck every moment, while he wandered along the streets of a desolated city, with something that recalled to his memory the idea of its former magnificence, breaking into the language of pathetic complaint. It ought to be observed, that the *prophetic* character with which we suppose the old and venerable mourner to have

* Preached on the Saturday before the celebration of the Lord's supper.

been

been inveſted, inexpreſſibly heightens the diſtreſs upon the preſent occaſion. By placing before our minds, at the ſame time, the affliction of the prophet, and the deſolation of the holy city, we find, that each of theſe objects illuſtrates the other; and the heart is irreſiſtibly penetrated by the concurrence of two circumſtances ſo well adapted to awake its ſenſibility. On this occaſion let us pauſe a little, till I have recounted a ſtory which is naturally ſuggeſted by the preſent ſubject, and which is recorded in the hiſtory of *Ancient Rome*.

At the time when thoſe civil commotions began which brought on the decline of the Roman republic, we are told, that one of the conſuls of Rome, who had been ſix times inveſted with the ſupreme magiſtracy of his country, as the reward of his victories, and diſtinguiſhed ability; that this great man having been defeated in his old age by a ſucceſsful competitor, was driven from Rome; that a price was ſet upon his head; and that all perſons were forbidden, under a capital penalty, to afford him ſhelter throughout the extent of the Roman empire. The venerable exile, after having been hunted by his enemies from place to place through the Italian provinces; worn out at laſt with watching, and ſinking beneath the united preſſure of age and ſorrow, wandered to the ſea-ſhore, found a ſhip, and prevailed upon the mariners to land him upon the oppoſite coaſt, which was that

of Africa. Not far from the place at which *Marius* (for that was the name of this perſonage) touched the ſhore, had ſtood, not many years before, the celebrated city of *Carthage*, the rival of *Rome* for many ages, which had obſtinately maintained the ſtruggle with her for dominion, and had not yielded until ſhe had brought this laſt to the brink of deſtruction. *Now*, however, a place ſo lately the ſeat of empire, exhibited only a ſcene of deſolation; and the yet recent ruins of its palaces, that had reſounded to the voice of feſtivity, recalled the idea of what it once had been. The Hero, deeming theſe ſacred remains a kind of temporary aſylum, ſat down in melancholy contemplation among the ruins; indulging moſt probably ſuch thoughts as the objects around him muſt naturally have poured upon his mind. He remained not however undiſturbed even in this retreat. The news of his arrival ſoon reached the governor of the province; who, embarraſſed as he was betwixt the commands of the ſenate, and his reluctance, in the preſent inſtance, to carry theſe into execution, endeavoured to purſue a middle courſe; and ſent private orders to Marius, to leave, without delay, the place where he was, and the province itſelf where he preſided, as he would not forfeit his life. The old warrior heard this meſſage, and remained ſome time without making any reply. Probably buried in thought, and overcome by a ſucceſſion of calamities to which no end appeared,

peared, he grew indifferent with regard to his deſtiny, and gave himſelf up to deſpair. When the meſſenger however repeated his commiſſion, and aſked with impatience what anſwer he ſhould return to his maſter, — the aged general, lifting up his eyes, made him this ſhort reply only: "Go tell (ſaid he) "your maſter, that you have ſeen *Caius* "*Marius* ſitting on the ruins of Carthage."

Such a ſpectacle as this, my brethren, but one incomparably more affecting, does the preſent ſcene exhibit to your reflection. The peculiar people of God given up, as the puniſhment of their many rebellions, to the power of their enemies, were now hanging their harps upon the willows of the Euphrates; their country was deſpoiled univerſally of its inhabitants; and Jeruſalem, like Carthage, having now become the abode of *Silence*, gave a theme to the ſong of the lamenting prophet: "How doth the city ſit ſolitary "that was full of people!"

Thus far we may ſuppoſe Jeremiah to have been actuated only by the love of his country, and his ideas to have ariſen from the ſcenes that paſſed immediately before him. The exclamation of the text, however, which is much more particular, cannot be ſuppoſed to regard this circumſtance only. It is therefore ſuppoſed to have been uttered in conſequence of his preſcience of future events. It would ſeem, that at this inſtant he compared the preſent ruin of the holy city with that miſery

miſery which his devoted countrymen would one day bring upon themſelves, by crucifying the Lord of life and happineſs; and conſidered in his *prophetic* character, ſuch a diſplay of futurity may perhaps have been preſented to his mind. At any rate, as we are taught to believe, that no individual of the human race ever adopted this exclamation with ſo much propriety as the Saviour of mankind; and as the preſent occaſion calls upon us, in a particular manner, to confirm and illuſtrate this aſſertion, I ſhall therefore endeavour, (with divine aſſiſtance), in the following diſcourſe,

1. To enumerate the principal of thoſe cauſes from which human miſery derives its origin; and to ſhow in what manner theſe concurred to render the whole life of the Divine Author of our religion more unhappy than that of any other man.

2. From the conſideration of his laſt ſufferings, as rendering it indiſputable, that never was ſorrow like unto his ſorrow, we ſhall paſs to the advantages which he has procured for his people, and to an application of the ſubject to the preſent occaſion.

I. WHAT then, my brethren, are the principal cauſes of the miſeries to which man is ſubjected, pronounced, as he is by an inſpired writer, and knowing him, as we *muſt* know him from experience, to be "born to "trouble as the ſparks fly upwards?" This is

is indeed a melancholy theme. But the contemplation of it anſwers many excellent purpoſes: it tends to mortify the pride of the human heart, and to render our obſervations on men and things conformable to the ſtandard of truth and nature; it diſcovers the true light in which life itſelf and its enjoyments ought to be conſidered by an intelligent and immortal agent; and by giving an edge to the *ſympathetic* feelings of the heart, it promotes that good-will to all, that univerſal charity, which is ſaid in ſcripture emphatically to be "the bond of perfectneſs."

The many evils (as theſe are deemed) by whoſe influence human life is rendered unhappy, ariſe either from external cauſes, as, pain, ſickneſs, trials, diſappointment; or from the internal frame and conſtitution of the mind, as it is either faſhioned by nature, or directed by experience, to form various eſtimates of the preſent or the future. In the firſt of theſe caſes, (I mean corporeal ſufferings of any kind), it is often difficult, if not impoſſible, to diſtinguiſh theſe cauſes from each other. In theſe inſtances the diſeaſe by which the body is emaciated, extends its influence to the mind; the ſpirits become depreſſed and languid, even when the nobler faculties exert their uſual operations; imagination forms gloomy preſages with regard to futurity; and the other intellectual powers, diſconcerted, though not weakened, by her influence, exert their force in an improper direction.

rection. In this, therefore, man appears to be more unhappy than in any other ſituation. Other calamities may either be prevented by circumſpection while yet at a diſtance, or remedied by fortitude when we are expoſed to their power. But in the preſent caſe, as no precaution whatever can ward off the ſtroke, however clearly foreſeen; ſo its ſeverity is ſuch when it is once felt, (the mind participating of the diſeaſe of the body), as to render ordinary reſources wholly ineffectual.

This ſource of affliction, however, is but one of many others by whoſe influence the happineſs of man is interrupted. Need I call upon you, my brethren, to recollect the various inſtances in which your expectations have been fruſtrated, even when theſe were raiſed, as you may have ſuppoſed, upon the moſt ſolid and permanent foundation? Is it, do you think, in the power of human wiſdom, however provident and comprehenſive, either to foreſee theſe ariſing, as they do, from every quarter, or to ſteel the mind with fortitude againſt their attacks? —Behold the huſbandman careful and induſtrious in the buſineſs of his profeſſion, earning his ſubſiſtence "with the ſweat of his brow." He ploughs, he manures, he enricheth his field; he conſigns the grain to it at a proper ſeaſon; he leaves nothing unattempted by which he may enſure a plentiful crop; and after having thus performed his part, he waits with the reaſonable expectation of being rewarded in the harveſt.

veſt. At the diſtance of a few years, ſhould you again behold this honeſt and induſtrious man, with his little family, dejected with ſuffering, or perhaps ſtarving with want; he would reply to your queſtion, By what means he was brought into this ſituation? That, in oppoſition to his moſt ſtrenuous efforts, a ſucceſſion of unfavourable ſeaſons had overthrown his expectations; that year after year had ſeen him declining into the vale of indigence; that his little pittance had been waſted in procuring neceſſary ſubſiſtence to his family; and that the laſt morſel was now ſnatched from them, and that himſelf was conſigned to ſorrow, with the deſpair of deliverance.

Behold the merchant anxiouſly and juſtly ſolicitous to acquire what he may deem a competence of riches. Do you aſk him, when the greateſt part of what he hath purchaſed, at the expence of many years of toil and vexation, is buried in the deep, is ſcattered on the winds of heaven; when he appears to have laboured, not for himſelf, but to ſupply the inſatiable wants of ſome man who beholds his ruin without the feeling of remorſe;—do you aſk, By what means all this hath been brought about? He will reply, and very probably with ſtrict truth, That his memory ſuggeſts to him no inſtance of importance in which he hath been wanting to himſelf; but that his utmoſt circumſpection hath been inſufficient to prevent the ſtroke that brought deſtruction along with it.—In theſe, and in many other

caſes

caſes of a ſimilar kind, diſappointments are often the cauſe of ſevere affliction, when the mind, upon the moſt impartial recollection, is unable to diſcover the cauſe from which they proceeded. At other times, indeed, theſe are the conſequences of precipitance, of imprudence, of having formed haſty judgements, or of having made bold and deſperate attempts; in which laſt caſes, indeed, the miſery muſt no doubt differ in degree, though all in general contribute to render the days of man *evil* as well as *few*.

Another ſource of affliction, the more deeply to be regretted, becauſe it is often the lot of the beſt and worthieſt of men, is that detraction which purſues the virtuous, and which preſents the human heart in ſo unfavourable a point of view. In how many inſtances are the ſhafts of this fiend of hell levelled at the honeſt and unſuſpicious, in order to gratify malevolence, by rendering the innocent unhappy! — I am aware, that in caſes of this kind it is commonly ſaid, that a man may derive conſolation from the reflection of not having deſerved to ſuffer, and from the ſecret approbation with which he reviews his own conduct. This conſideration will no doubt exert conſiderable influence when he becomes cool and diſpaſſionate, and when he is able to carry his views forward into immortality. But while theſe laſt are confined to a preſent life only, the conſciouſneſs of innocence, which a man is yet deprived of the means of making as clear

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to the world as it is to himſelf, gives an edge and pungency to the ſting of affliction, becauſe to all his other ſufferings it ſuperadds an impatience, whoſe claim upon him he is unable to gratify. This evil is likewiſe greatly heightened when it falls to the lot of ſuch men as, either from a natural indolence of temper, from real weakneſs of intellect, or from inferiority of external circumſtances, are unable to ward off the ſtroke which threatens them with deſtruction. At theſe the darts of Calumny are pointed on all ſides with a ſteady purpoſe; in the ſame manner as the hunter, who would tremble to face the lion and the tiger in his walk, makes his prey of the little trembling hare, which cannot move him by ſupplication, and which is unable to reſiſt him by force!

Caſt your eyes, my brethren, around you in the world; and from ſurveying the palaces of the great, and the luxuries of the opulent, go into the ſolitary receſſes, where the worthy heart pines in fruitleſs affliction, and think on the diſtreſſes of thoſe who have none to give them relief. Is there an object of any kind calculated to impreſs a ſuſceptible heart more forcibly, than a mind rich in every valuable qualification, ſinking beneath the preſſure of unmerited reproach; and a man, in conſequence of his own integrity and candour, (qualities which ought to have rendered him the object of univerſal eſteem), caught in the toils of deceit, and ſtruggling

with the worſt of ills, the ſcourge of an unfeeling and mercileſs world, that has neither love nor pity? Yet how often does this deplorable calamity fall out in life! Senſual and conceited as we are, ſometimes *unable*, and more frequently *unwilling*, to examine matters with cool and deliberate impartiality, we are dazzled by riches, miſled by favour, directed by intereſt, or rendered obdurate from pride, pique, and partiality, prejudice and paſſion: motives which we dare not avow to our own hearts, influence our judgement on the conduct of others; and what a judgement this muſt be, thoſe who have witneſſed, or thoſe who have found its effects, are beſt qualified to decide.

But are theſe, though the ſources of many calamities in life, to be regarded as the cauſes of *all* the evils that obtain in the world? No, my brethren; every paſſion in the human mind hath its diſtinct and inſeparable train. Ambition and pride, envy and avarice, revenge and hatred, jealouſy and anger, and many other ſources of miſery, ariſing from ourſelves, by deſtroying the happineſs of individuals, extend their influence to the ſpecies. The field of life, by means of theſe, becomes chequered with that deep ſhading which diſcolours its moſt exhilarating objects; with thoſe clouds which darken its brighteſt horizon, and which involve in their ſkirts the tents of the upright and innocent, as well as of the profligate and unworthy.

II. Or

II. Of the evils which we have thus enumerated, as abounding in the world, it may afford us ſome conſolation to obſerve in geneneral, that however individuals of the ſpecies may have been oppreſſed by *many ſuch* troubles; yet no ſingle perſon hath ever at one time been overwhelmed with all. We have indeed already obſerved, that when the external and internal cauſes of theſe co-operate in any caſe, the man is rendered *miſerable* for the time. But even in this caſe we have ſhown, that a great part of his miſery muſt have its ſource in a gloomy and diſtempered imagination. It is indeed true, that the pain ariſing from its ideal repreſentations, is equally intenſe as that which is derived from *real* cauſes, while it continues to operate. But we muſt remember likewiſe, that though the mind, in this laſt caſe, may ſuffer *in idea* under ſo many troubles as never *really* combine to overwhelm it; yet what has its origin in a diſeaſe of the body, will ſubſide with the complaint by which it was brought on; and that it is not of imaginary but of *real* evils that we mean at preſent to exhibit a repreſentation.

Let us then bring together as many of theſe laſt as we can ſuppoſe to have been united in any one inſtance, and let us judge in what manner any man would be affected by their concurrence. In order to conceive of this matter properly, the man muſt be placed in low, and even in deſtitute circumſtances; his friends muſt be ſo obſcure in the world, as

to be incapable of giving any aſſiſtance; and his own ſituation ſuch, as to render their utmoſt exertions at all times neceſſary. Let us next ſuppoſe him with a heart overflowing with tenderneſs and affection, to have his benevolent offices repaid with repeated inſtances of perfidy and ingratitude; he muſt be purſued by the curſes of thoſe whom he had bleſſed; his maxims, though calculated to promote the trueſt intereſts of mankind, muſt be rejected with contempt, and himſelf rendered an object of univerſal deriſion; rage and revilings muſt be returned to his tendereſt expoſtulations; and we muſt ſuppoſe him to be caſt out as one with whom it is unfit to hold any ſocial intercourſe, at the very inſtant when his heart is ſuſceptible of the warmeſt affection, and when his hand performs offices of conſummate benevolence; wandering in this manner, a poor, deſpiſed, and, to all appearance, a deſpicable outcaſt, perſecution and calumny muſt follow in his footſteps. You muſt think on a man whoſe beſt actions are expoſed to miſconſtruction, whoſe words are tortured into the worſt ſenſes they can bear, whoſe tears are diſregarded, whoſe remonſtrances are unheeded, whoſe expoſtulations however rational, and whoſe complaints however pathetic, are equally deſpiſed, and whom all in general combine to overwhelm with the torrent of reproach. If to all theſe calamities we ſuperadd the more ordinary ones of hunger and thirſt; of a

man

man without a hut to ſhelter him from the ſummer-drought or the winter-ſtorm, who makes his abode with the tenants of the deſert, and who pours out his ſoul, when excluded from ſociety, in the language of ſupplication for his bittereſt enemies. — What, Chriſtians, would you ſay of ſuch a man, expoſed to diſtreſſes ſo complicated and overwhelming? — What! — Methinks I hear in reply to the queſtion from every mouth, — Is not this repreſentation ideal and imaginary? are not theſe circumſtances thrown together with a purpoſe of exciting compaſſion, not by the recital of what has actually fallen out, but by the conjecture of what may ſimply be poſſible? — No, my brethren, they are *not* mentioned with this purpoſe. — *Such a man as this*, poor, deſpiſed, deſtitute to external appearance, expoſed to ingratitude, treated with deriſion, torn with anguiſh, ſtabbed with reproach; — *ſuch a man as this*, — "wonder, O "Heavens!" and be aſtoniſhed, O Earth!" — did that *Being* become, by whoſe miniſtraſtration GOD is ſaid "to have *created the* "*worlds*," who is exalted at the right hand of the Father, and from whoſe eyes, when in wrath, "the heavens and the earth are ſaid to "fly away."

Conſider a little the end of his miſſion: "He came into the world to ſave that which "was loſt;" he came likewiſe, "to leave his "people an example that they ſhould follow "his ſteps." — In what did this example con-

ſiſt? "He was in all things made like unto "us, and in *all things* tempted as we are, ſin "only excepted."—Are any of you, my friends, diſtreſſed, becauſe your circumſtances are low in the world, becauſe you may be expoſed to the contumely of the proud, and want many of thoſe things which contribute in your opinion to the happineſs of life?—In order to reconcile you to theſe circumſtances, carry your eye to an inconſiderable village in Judea, and behold the Lord of life, a helpleſs infant, laid in the lap of his mother, "born in a ſtable, and laid in a man-"ger." How great, how *infinite* I had almoſt ſaid, is the difference betwixt the Saviour of mankind, and the *meaneſt of us*, with regard to external circumſtances!—In the times in which we live, infants, even when forſaken by their parents, find a reſource in the compaſſion of mankind, and receive that relief from others which they are unable to procure to themſelves. But no ſooner did the Eternal Word aſſume a tabernacle of clay, than the village of Bethlehem was ſtained with the blood of innocents by a tyrant who thirſted for his blameleſs life.

You amidſt the afflictions of life have friends to ſympathiſe in your diſtreſſes, and to heal the wounded heart with the balm of conſolation. But "He (we are told) came to his own, "and his own received Him not." His diſciples, as poor as himſelf, inſtead of ſtanding by him in the hour of tribulation, "with

"one

" one conſent forſook him, and fled."—Again, Chriſtians, the pooreſt of you all has ſome dwelling, however mean, ſome habitation in which you can be ſcreened from the ſtorms of the inhoſpitable winter. Nor is this peculiar to the *human* kind: The lion hath his den, in which he rears up his young; the wolf hath his cave, in which he broods over his prey; in the chinks of the rock the ſwallow lies ſecure, and ſleeps away the moments till the return of ſummer. But can you, my brethren, without bleeding hearts, hear that Being, " without whom nothing is ſaid to " have been made that was made," himſelf complaining, that " the foxes had holes, and " the birds of the air had neſts, but that the " *Son of Man* could not find a place to lay his " head!—No ſhelter had he from the ſtormy elements; no table, however mean, at which he might enjoy the ineſtimable bleſſings of independence and content. But after having waſted his ſtrength in inſtructing the multitude; after having been fatigued with the exerciſes of continually doing good; at the approach of night, when the hireling reſts from his labour, and takes his neceſſary repoſe in tranquillity; at that ſeaſon, ſometimes muſing in the naked deſert, ſometimes retiring to the ſolitary hill; when no human ear could hear his complaint, he lifted up his eyes to the God of Nature, and, in the melting language of ſupplication, lamented the weakneſs,

neſs, and implored forgiveneſs for the ingratitude of man.

Hear him, my brethren, again, ye who have met with many diſappointments in your intercourſe with mankind; — hear him expoſtulating with the people of the Jews, in language calculated to melt even a frozen heart into pity: "Ye will not (ſays he), ye will "not come to ME that ye may have life."— "I receive not honour from men, though I "come from the Father. But if an impoſtor "ſhould come to you in his own name, to "him you would readily and attentively liſten." What anguiſh of ſpirit wrung from his gentle heart, overflowing with affection, this tender and ineffably pathetic expoſtulation!

You (if there are any ſuch among you) who have reared an only child to maturity, the darling of your hearts, and the delight of your eyes; who have watched over his infant-years with reſtleſs aſſiduity; and who, by his unnatural conduct when arrived at manhood, have ſeen all your expectations cruelly diſappointed: — follow your Redeemer in his approach to Jeruſalem, near the time when he was led to crucifixion; when "he beheld the "city, and wept over it," feeling, not the rancour of an *injured ſufferer*, but the tenderneſs of a *parent!* He looked back upon the former days, when the candle of the Lord was lighted up in that city; and, diſregarding all that was to happen to himſelf, broke out into the paſſionate language of a Father!

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" O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem! thou that killeſt " the prophets, and ſtoneſt them who are " ſent unto thee! how often would I have " gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chick- " ens under her wings; but thou wouldſt " not!" Thus lamenting the obſtinacy of his enemies, at the time when he might have called for vengeance on their wickedneſs; *death*, with all its terrors, appeared in his eyes but a ſecondary object; the rejection of the Jews, and the final deſtruction of that devoted city, filled his eyes with tears, and drew from his heart the language of diſappointed affection.

Have you again, my brethren, ſuffered by detraction and calumny? have your beſt actions been expoſed to miſconſtruction? and has it been your unhappy fate to bear that worſt of evils, the loſs of your good name, without having done any thing to forfeit ſo ineſtimable a benefit? This is a bitter draught indeed; but this draught was likewiſe drank off to the very lees by the Saviour of mankind, though compoſed of the worſt and moſt noxious ingredients. Survey the whole ſeries of his life, from his cradle to his grave; and then aſk yourſelves, What reproachful epithet was not applied to him which hell itſelf could invent, or which the malignity of mankind could beſtow? Did they not brand him with the names of a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and ſinners, an impoſtor, a blaſphemer; and, to ſum up all, a perſon

who

who was in league with the devil himſelf, and who acted under his influence? "He caſts "out devils (ſaid they) by the power of Belzeebub, the prince of the devils."—What a character this for the Prince of Peace, the meek, the humble, the benevolent Jeſus; for him who "ſpoke as never man ſpoke," and in whoſe compaſſionate breaſt no feelings ever took place, but thoſe of the moſt fervent love, the tendereſt pity, or the moſt perfect benignity to the children of men!

See him then, Chriſtians, as the mark at which Calumny diſcharged her envenomed arrows! Behold him ſurrounded on all ſides with rancorous enemies, ſometimes laying plans to draw him into tranſgreſſions, and ſometimes endeavouring to entrap him in his words! Every miracle he performed added feuel to their implacable animoſity; and at the inſtant when he was performing miraculous cures, we are told, that they were prevented only by the fear of the multitude, from dragging him, with rage and curſes, to crucifixion!

To all theſe evils let us add, as what gave the laſt heightening to the others, the agonies which he ſometimes felt in his body, in conſequence of the troubles that agitated his mind. In his ſolitary moments, when he went apart to meditate on the work that was given him to do; when the rage of ſome, the ignorance of others, the blindneſs, the obſtinacy, the ingratitude of all, the ſcene of ſuffering

fering that lay before him, his mock trial, his revilings, his pain, his crucifixion, aroſe in dreadful ſucceſſion to his thoughts; when he ſaw the hour in which, forſaken by all his followers, he would be left to tread the wine-preſs of his Father's wrath alone, even deprived for a time of his celeſtial countenance; left, as it were, at once by Heaven and Earth: — what do you think, with theſe proſpects before him, — what muſt have been that anguiſh which operated ſo powerfully on the ſprings of life, as that blood, inſtead of ſweat, ſtained the ground on which he lay!

May we not now, Chriſtians, apply the words of the prophet to the ſcene before us? May we not ſay to you in his language, "Be- "hold, and ſee, if there was ever any ſor- "row like unto his ſorrow, wherewith the "Lord afflicted him in the day of his anger?" When we behold him poor, forſaken, forlorn, deſpiſed and rejected of men; when we take into the account a *whole people* concurring to follow with infamy and reproach, with rage and perſecution, an individual, the beſt, the wiſeſt, the moſt benevolent, that ever ſojourned among men: what are all the common afflictions of life collected together in any one inſtance, to a ſcene of miſery ſo conſummate as this!

But as far as we have yet followed Jeſus through the ſtages of his life, a great part of his trouble aroſe from the proſpect of what was to happen to him. The recollection of

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theſe it was that made him cry out, in the garden of Gethſemane, "Father, if it be poſ-"ſible, let this cup paſs from me!" This part therefore of his ſufferings, and this alone, was heightened, when *certainty* took place of terrifying *expectation*. Yet a little longer then, my brethren, let us view him near the cloſe of his life, ſitting down with his diſciples, and inſtituting the ſacrament of his ſupper, when he knew that the hour approached in which all his ſufferings were to be terminated by the death of crucifixion. With what perfect compoſure did he ſet about this ſolemn inſtitution! Though he knew, (as he told his followers), that "he would drink no more of the fruit "of the vine, until he drank it in his Fa-"ther's kingdom;" though he was aware, likewiſe, that he who would betray him ſat with him at the table; yet, with this proſpect before and around him, he diſtributed the ſymbols of his body and blood with the ſame ſedateneſs as if no alarming incident had been to diſturb the quiet of a temperate day, verging ſerenely to its cloſe.

This little interval of eaſe was the ſuſpicious calm that preſages a tempeſt. For lo! conducted by one of the twelve, who had ſold his Maſter for a piece of money, the officers of the Sanhedrim break in upon his retirement! The wretch, with the price of blood in his hands, ſalutes the man whom he had devoted to death. O Avarice! inſatiable of heart! of what evils art thou the deteſted original! By thy influence

the

the Lord of life, the God of love, is, for a wretched pittance of the duſt of the earth, betrayed by one of his own followers. A few pieces of ſilver, cancel from the thought of thy ſlave, love, pity, gratitude, and remorſe; and extinguiſhing thus at once every ſentiment of humanity, and every feeling of compaſſion; make him betray the life of his Maſter for a price ſcarcely ſufficient to purchaſe the dagger that was plunged into his heart!

And now the ſeries of his ſufferings began to draw nearer to a period. — O ye who have moiſtened with your tears the pillow of a dying friend, or have performed the laſt melancholy office to an only child! — ye whoſe hearts, however hardened by time and ſuffering, are not ſteeled againſt the pangs of ſorrow, and are yet ſuſceptible of anguiſh from ſcenes of complicated diſtreſs! — behold your Saviour, after having led a life of innocence and ſuffering, led out to a death of ignominy and ſhame! Think of the love, the pity, the inexpreſſible ſenſations that preyed upon his heart, when he looked upon that devoted crew who were hurrying him to deſtruction! — Behold, he is arraigned before Pilate! The Lamb of God is led out to ſlaughter! — What trial was he admitted to undergo? — The moſt atrocious criminals are intitled to the forms of juſtice in caſes of this kind. — His judge alone, tho' a Heathen, is ſmitten in conſcience, and is unable to pronounce his ſentence. — Among the Jews, rage and fury appear to have taken

place of ſober reflection; and the cry, "*Cru-*
"*cify him! Crucify him!*" reſounds ſo loudly from every quarter, that the aſtoniſhed Roman is borne down by the torrent.

As yet, however, the infatuated multitude have not filled up the meaſure of their iniquities; as yet the laſt ſtroke is ſuſpended, and his enemies, however implacable, have not imbrued their hands in his blood.—But the time now approached when their guilt was to ſtand without a parallel.—For lo! after having reviled, buffeted, and ſpit in his face, led out like a felon, his body is bared, and the mercileſs executioner "ploughs his back" with the bloody ſcourge!—*Great GOD!*—Was it the LORD of NATURE who was thus treated?—Was it HE who is to judge the quick and the dead?—Was it that Being who is "the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the "*expreſs image* of his perſon?"—Well may we indeed exclaim, "Wonder, O Heavens! "and be aſtoniſhed, O Earth!"—All the hoſt of heaven, no doubt, looked down with aſtoniſhment at that awful hour; and no wonder that the earth was ſhaken from her foundation!

Carry your eyes, my brethren, a little onward, and behold on Mount Calvary the dreadful apparatus for *execution!*—With a mock robe upon his back, "a crown of thorns "upon his head," his face ſtained with blood, his joints relaxed with toil, his ſoul overwhelmed with anguiſh, and his heart heaving with

with agony, *HE is ſtretched out upon the croſs!* —The nails are applied to his hands and his feet! — Hark! *The hammer reſounds!* — O Chriſtians! let me call off your thoughts from a ſcene that cannot be uttered, to behold its effects on the frame of Nature. — Lo! the ſun veils his face, and is unable to look on! the ſtars at noon-day are ſeen trembling on the vault of heaven! a ſudden earthquake cleaves the rock! and, as if the general audit was already come, the dead ariſe from their ſepulchres, with prophetic horror glaring in their eyes! — In the mean time JESUS, hanging betwixt heaven and earth, looks down with pity upon his murderers! He hears the dreadful cry, "His blood be upon *us*, *and* "*upon our children!*" and, looking up to his Father, cries out, "Father, forgive them; "for they know not what they do!"—"Now "(we are told) it was about the ſixth hour; "and there was darkneſs over all the earth "until the ninth hour; and the ſun was "darkened, and the veil of the temple was "rent in the midſt." — The darkneſs that overſpread the earth appeared to correſpond with that horror which now fell upon the mind of our Redeemer. For a moment a cloud ſeemed to veil the complacent countenance of the Father! He caſt his eye around to behold him, and exclaimed, "My God, "My God! why haſt *Thou* forſaken me?"— What do you think, my brethren, was his agony at that inſtant? — For your ſakes his

body writhed, his blood ſtreamed, and his lips almoſt uttered the language of deſpair!

But once more, Chriſtians, turn your eyes to his face, now pale at the approach of death! He raiſeth it again to Heaven; and knowing that *all was now completed*, and exclaiming with a loud voice, "*It is finiſhed*," he bows his head, and gives up the ghoſt.

III. SUCH is that ſcene which many of you whoſe hearts at this inſtant may be pained by recollecting it, are ſoon going to commemorate. Do you feel from the preceding repreſentation, imperfect and feeble as it is, love, pity, and gratitude, alternately excited in your breaſts? Are you more zealous now than when you entered this ſacred houſe, to "do this in remembrance of him?"—Let this truth then be impreſſed upon your minds when you are employed in this ſolemn action, that the commemoration of the death of Chriſt can be no further beneficial to you, than as it produceth in you a ſteady determination to imitate the virtues of his life. "Chriſt (ſays an apoſtle) ſuffered for us, "leaving us an example that we may follow "his ſteps." As our Saviour's life conſiſted principally of a ſeries of ſufferings; ſo in his example are diſplayed all thoſe virtues which are called out into exerciſe by adverſity. Patience, fortitude, humility, reſignation, forgiveneſs, thoſe excellencies, which, though the objects of our admiration at a diſtance,

ſtance, we are at leaſt able to transfuſe into our conduct, ſhine with diſtinguiſhed luſtre in the example of Chriſt. To many of his ſufferings you cannot be expoſed; by ſome of theſe your reſolution would be wholly overthrown. In trials, therefore, of an inferior kind, ſuited to your ſituation, and proportioned to your ability, let his example animate you to make the moſt ſtrenuous efforts; and while you profeſs yourſelves to be his diſciples, call upon him, as the Hearer of prayer, to render theſe efforts effectual. While you meditate therefore on his laſt ſufferings; while you pour out your ſouls to him in the fervency of prayer; may your hearts burn within you, like thoſe of the diſciples, when "he opened to them the ſcriptures," and "when he was made known to them in the "breaking of bread!"—May your reſolution to imitate him, who was "in all things made "like unto us," be ſincere, permanent, and univerſal! May you be enabled to devote yourſelves through life to his ſervice and obedience; and by a ſteady adherence to his precepts, may you be prepared for participating with him of eternal felicity in the land of feſtivity and rejoicing! *Amen.*

SERMON XIII.

The Cauſe, Symptoms, and Cure, of Indifference to Religion.

By ANDREW GRAY, D. D.

Preached before the Commiſſioner to the General Aſſembly, May 31. 1767.

PSAL. lxxxv. 6.

Will thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?

IT is generally agreed, that this pſalm was compoſed after the return of the Jews from their captivity, or, at leaſt, reviſed on that occaſion; and delivered to the chief muſician, to be ſung as a proper anthem of praiſe after ſo ſignal a deliverance. The hiſtory of Ezra informs us of the violent oppoſition made by the neighbouring people to the rebuilding of the city and temple, whereby the work was for ſome time greatly obſtructed. To this there ſeems to be a plain alluſion in the 4th and 5th verſes, where the pious author deprecates the diſpleaſure of the Almighty, to which he attributes the danger that threatened this people; and, in our text,

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he earneſtly prays, that God, together with the re-eſtabliſhment of their civil and eccleſiaſtic conſtitution, would revive a ſpirit of true piety and virtue, both among rulers and people, that their joy and happineſs might ſtand ſecure on its true foundation: *Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?*

Theſe words, then, preſent a ſubject of the utmoſt importance to our ſerious conſideration: That the real happineſs of any nation, enjoying the invaluable bleſſings of peace and liberty, and profeſſing the true religion, conſiſts in their being animated by its ſpirit; without which the greateſt national advantages are of little avail. This good man therefore, anxious for the happineſs of his country, prays, not only that the deſigns of its enemies might be defeated, and its religion and liberty ſecured; but likewiſe that God would inſpire his people with a ſpirit ſuited to their advantages; that he would baniſh from among them a cold indifference to religion, which, in truth, and in the pious man's judgement, bore a more threatening aſpect to the public happineſs, than all the malice and violence of their foes; and that he would revive that ſpirit of piety and righteouſneſs, which alone can ſupport and exalt a nation.

In diſcourſing further upon this ſubject, I ſhall,

1. Point out ſome of the principal cauſes that

that concur in producing a coldneſs and indifference to religion in any ſociety.

2. The viſible ſymptoms of the prevalence and progreſs of this fatal diſeaſe amongſt ourſelves.

3. The proper means of reviving, through the divine bleſſing, a ſpirit of piety and virtue.

I. I ſhall firſt point out ſome of the principal cauſes that concur in producing a coldneſs and indifference to religion in any ſociety.

Indifference to religion, which is ſo hurtful to the happineſs of a nation, conſiſts in the want of a due impreſſion of its truth and importance. It ſtands directly oppoſite to that principle which is termed *faith*, and deſcribed as the baſis and foundation of all genuine and ſubſtantial virtue. Faith, in the ſenſe and language of ſcripture, does not ſignify a mere aſſent to the truths of religion, as matter of opinion; but ſuch a deep and penetrating conviction of their importance, and connection with our temporal and eternal happineſs, as becomes a powerful principle of virtuous conduct. Every ſyſtem of religion, whether of divine original or human invention, has a peculiar ſpirit and genius, which forms the diſtinguiſhing character of its ſincere votaries. This characteriſtical ſpirit is not ſo much to be diſcerned in its precepts or laws, as in the general tendency of its doctrines,

trines, and inſtitutions of worſhip. Even in the moſt abſurd religious ſyſtem, there may be found many good and moral injunctions, blended with others of a trivial and corrupt nature. But no ſyſtem of laws, however excellent in themſelves, will be of any conſiderable efficacy to form a truly pious and virtuous temper in the votaries of any religion, if they are enforced by doctrines, and ſupported by inſtitutions of worſhip, which are of a corrupting and immoral tendency. On the contrary, the general ſpirit and temper, gradually infuſed by an abſurd and falſe ſyſtem of religious belief, will enervate its moral precepts, and render them of no effect. How greatly then do they miſtake the caſe, who think it a matter of mere indifference, what ſcheme of religious principles men form to themſelves, whether true or falſe: for the more ſincere they are in their religious belief and profeſſion, and the more deeply they are impreſſed with a ſenſe of its truth and importance, their temper and diſpoſitions will take a correſpondent tincture, either of purity or impurity, of excellence or depravity. It is only divine and moral truth which can enlighten the ſoul, and purify the heart. In a word, the goſpel-revelation, which contains the nobleſt ſyſtem of religion that was ever propoſed to mankind; which exhibits the moſt juſt and amiable character of the Deity, and extenſive views of his moral government; which not only delineates the rule

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of duty in its fulleſt extent, but alſo enforces its obligation by the authority of the Supreme Legiſlator, who is continually carrying on the moſt beneficent plan of our redemption, from a ſtate of guilt and depravity, to happineſs and immortal life; does evidently evidently eſtabliſh the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs on the ſureſt baſis. Now, from all this it muſt appear, that the genuine ſpirit of the goſpel is that of univerſal virtue, which can be the effect only of a juſt view, and ſerious belief, of its divine principles. When, therefore, the true ſpirit of religion is declining in any Chriſtian ſociety, and, on the contrary, a ſpiritual languor and inſenſibility is growing apace, it muſt be in a great meaſure owing to the following cauſes cooperating to produce it, viz. Ignorance of the truths and obligations of religion; or, Inattention to its importance, and connection with true happineſs; An abſurd ſpirit of ſcepticiſm, in ſome, as to all religious principles in general; and, A factious and diviſive ſpirit, in others, about matters of leſs importance and doubtful interpretation.

1. Ignorance of the truths religion cannot fail to produce indifference to it, and effectually obſtruct improvement in its genuine ſpirit and temper. And, indeed, it is ſurpriſing what groſs miſtakes and miſrepreſentations of religion are to be met with amongſt people favoured with the beſt inſtitutions, and the beſt opportunities of attaining religious

ligious knowledge; nay even ſometimes among perſons of improved underſtanding, and juſt taſte, in other branches of uſeful knowledge.

The truth is, the care of cultivating religious knowledge is but too apt to be neglected by parents and others who have the charge of training up youth. While ſome attention is perhaps given to point out to them the duties they owe to ſociety, and to teach them thoſe accompliſhments which qualify them to make a figure in the world, the duties which they owe to God their Creator, and the means of being fitted for his heavenly kingdom, are often ſhamefully neglected, as of no importance or conſideration. A plan of education unconnected with any religious ſyſtem, ſeems too much the faſhionable mode with us. Hence an indifference to religion, and every thing connected with it, ſoon appears; which grows every day ſtronger and ſtronger, and attends numbers through all the ſtages of their after-life. This muſt at length iſſue in a ſtate of abſolute inſenſibility to moral and religious truth. Perhaps ſuch perſons ſtill retain the name of *Chriſtian* in common with others; but they neither know, nor are deſirous to know, any thing farther of the matter. They conſider all religions as alike; as a matter of mere mode or faſhion, according to the different taſtes and humours of different countries. Is then the ſpirit and character of the Chriſtian religion to be ſought for, or to be found,

found, amongſt ſuch blind and unprincipled votaries? Is not the frequent and fatal neglect of religious education to be juſtly viewed as one principal ſource of ignorance, and that ignorance the ſource of much licentiouſneſs, both of ſentiment and manners?

2. But if many are deſtroyed for lack of religious knowledge, inattention to the truths and ſacred obligations of religion makes havock of ſtill far greater numbers of mankind. Many ſeem to pay a ſort of political reſpect to the Chriſtian religion, merely as the religion of their country, eſtabliſhed by authority, and incorporated with our civil conſtitution. A ſenſe of decency prevents their deriding and contemning its public inſtitutions, and produces an occaſional conformity to them: but their faith, or attachment to the goſpel, goes no farther. They are neither avowed infidels nor ſound believers; they have never inquired into its origin, nor the ſalutary ends of its promulgation; they do not perhaps call in queſtion its truth in general; but they have no ſerious conviction of its importance, as a plan for conducting men to everlaſting happineſs: they have a general expectation of this happineſs; but they can give no reaſon of the hope that is in them. The character and diſpoſition of ſuch perſons with reſpect to religion, is preciſely that of the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot; againſt which temper of neutrality and indifference our Saviour expreſſes ſo great an averſion.

verſion. Is not this the real amount of the religious profeſſion of many who pretend to think more juſtly, and to form more extenſive views, than the vulgar? Can we reaſonably expect that their religious faith, if it deſerves the name, ſhould have the leaſt influence on their temper and conduct?

3. A ſpirit of ſcepticiſm among the learned and ſpeculative, in proportion as it ſpreads, has no ſmall influence to abate their zeal and attachment to the Chriſtian religion. Superficial reaſonings will always have weight with ſuperficial thinkers. The adverſaries of our holy religion have, of late years, changed their method of attack. After being ſo often foiled in the open field, they now try to work their way imperceptibly, by ſecret undermining; the tendency of which is only known by its effects. By introducing univerſal ſcepticiſm, by diſputing even the truth of ſelf-evident principles that are fundamental to all reaſoning, they lead their diſciples firſt to *doubt*, and then to *deny*, the eſſential principles of all religion. And, indeed, from ſcepticiſm to downright infidelity, the tranſition is natural and eaſy.

At any rate, an indifference to religion muſt certainly ſpread, and take deep root, in proportion as this ſceptical humour prevails or gains ground; and Chriſtianity itſelf, the nobleſt ſyſtem of divine truth, and the moſt proper for reforming the world, be treated merely as a ſubject of ſpeculation, which men

may receive or reject at pleasure. Such academics in religion, though equally averse to every religious system, yet might, with a better grace, assume any other name or profession than that of Christian; because, if the gospel is of divine original, and promulgated by the authority of Heaven; if its evidence be such as is sufficient to found a rational conviction of its truth; in this case, we are not only bound to give our assent to it, but to act upon the principles of that belief, as a matter of the last importance to our eternal happiness. If it does, indeed, contain "the words of eternal life," the only plan and terms of acceptance with God, then, surely, to reject it with scorn, or even to neglect to consider it with due attention, must be highly criminal and dangerous: "How "shall we escape, if we neglect so great salva-"tion?" Heb. ii. 3.

4. The same noxious disease, of indifference to religion, in any society, is always greatly cherished and promoted by a factious and divisive spirit in others, by ill-placed and intemperate zeal about points of lesser importance, and of a doubtful nature. Scepticism and bigotry, how opposite soever to one another, yet are often similar in their influence, and productive of the same effects; they are both equally repugnant to the true spirit of religion. They agree in taking away all distinction between the primary and secondary truths of religion; the one, by depressing the

the former into the obſcurity of the latter; the other, by exalting the latter to the dignity and importance of the former. The ſceptic aſſaults the ſyſtem of religion, by undermining its foundation; the bigot, by erecting an unwieldy ſuperſtructure of periſhing materials.

The folly and perverſeneſs of mankind often change their moſt important bleſſings into real evils, by abuſing them, contrary to the intention of the divine goodneſs. And there is no public bleſſing more frequently perverted in this manner, than that of liberty, both civil and religious. My ſubject naturally leads me to ſpeak of the latter; which, though one of the beſt of earthly bleſſings in itſelf, yet ſeldom fails, through miſimprovement, to hatch, under its prolific wings, many different ſects and parties, who generally proſecute the intereſts of their faction, with much heat and paſſion, under the name of *religious zeal*.

It would be extremely improper for me, at preſent, to make a diſſertation on the various ſects and factions which enjoy a legal indulgence amongſt us; and far more, to enter into a diſcuſſion of their ſeparating principles. Perhaps it might juſtly be thought to ſavour of that very ſpirit of animoſity which we condemn as ſo prejudicial to the moral influence of true religion. But, in general, one may venture to affirm, without offending the moſt angry diſputant, that the far greater

number of controverſial points among Proteſtants, are carried to a much greater height, and proſecuted with a keener zeal, than their weight and importance will bear; that amidſt ſo many queſtions, agitated with ſo much uncharitable humour, the eſſential points of religion ſeem to be but little underſtood, and ſtill leſs regarded; and that its moſt ſacred laws are often trampled on in the rage of diſputation.

What manifold miſchiefs doth not this factious and turbulent ſpirit produce? Particularly in cauſing many ſuperficial inquirers to think, that religion is merely a ſubject of diſpute and opinion, without any relation to life or manners; that its tendency is ſo far from promoting peace on earth, that it ſerves only to divide mankind more and more. Thus it is, that profeſſing Chriſtians, by their unchriſtian animoſities, have furniſhed infidels with the moſt plauſible objections againſt our holy religion: whereas, was this truly amiable inſtitution but fairly delineated, as taught by our Saviour and his apoſtles, and its exalted virtues exhibited to public obſervation, in the lives of its votaries; it could not fail to gain more proſelytes, than the moſt excellent apologies that were ever written in its defence. Theſe may convince the judgement, by diſplaying its evidence; but this would reach the heart, and captivate the affections to its love and obedience.

Happy, indeed, were it for Proteſtants, members

members of churches that are called *reformed*, if the experience of paſt ages taught them wiſdom, to differ in peace and charity, and to unite their influence againſt the adverſaries of their common faith. Was this the caſe, our religious controverſies would even become fewer in number; becauſe the minds of men would be better diſpoſed for ſeeing and embracing the truth, which prejudice and paſſion are ſo apt to disfigure, and conceal from our view.

I ſhall proceed to point out,

II. The viſible ſymptoms of the prevalence and progreſs of this fatal diſeaſe, of indifference to religion, amongſt ourſelves.

However difficult it may be to trace this noxious diſeaſe to its proper cauſes, yet its ſymptoms are plain and evident.

And, 1. Where-ever this ſpirit prevails, it will naturally produce a growing neglect, if not a contempt, of the inſtitutions of divine worſhip. Outward forms of worſhip and devotion are eſſential to religion, and abſolutely neceſſary to ſupport the ſerious belief and impreſſion of its truths on the minds of men; and when theſe are diſuſed, it is impoſſible to preſerve their moral influence on our temper and conduct. In this ſentiment all mankind have agreed, let their ſchemes of religion have been ever ſo oppoſite; and the ſame principle has been ratified and confirmed under all the diſpenſations of true religion.

When, therefore, at any period, we ſee numbers who profeſs the Chriſtian religion, either conſtantly or habitually abſenting themſelves from aſſemblies for divine worſhip; when ſuch frivolous pretences are deemed ſufficient for excuſing their abſence, as they would be aſhamed to plead in apology for the neglect of any appointed meeting for buſineſs, or even pleaſure; or if, when occaſionally they appear in the houſe of God, they plainly ſhow, by their deportment, that to worſhip the Almighty is no part of their intention; if ſuch a ſpirit as this ſhould prevail, eſpecially among thoſe whoſe example muſt have the greateſt influence to form the taſte and manners of the people, who would heſitate to ſay, that true piety was declining apace in ſuch a ſociety, and that an indifference to religion was ſpreading its noxious influence more and more?

2. In an age diſaffected to religion, we may alſo naturally expect to ſee its miniſters deſpiſed, even for their work's ſake. In every country where the leaſt notion of Deity has been diſcovered, we always find, not only *places*, but *perſons* too, conſecrated to religion, for the purpoſe of preſiding in religious aſſemblies, and directing the devotions of the people. So that this is a principle ſupported by the common ſenſe of mankind, that religion, as well as the arts and ſciences, requires its public miniſters and teachers. Are then public foundations for inſtructing youth

youth in the different branches of literature and uſeful knowledge, ſo generally applauded and eſtabliſhed among all civilized nations? and ſhall any be found ſo abſurd and unreaſonable, as to account the miniſtry of the goſpel an unneceſſary inſtitution?

When, therefore, this ſacred office is held by many in diſrepute, is made the jeſt of the ſcorner, and the ſong of the drunkard; when the ſcanty proviſion allotted for its maintenance in times of greater reſpect for religion, is conſidered as an unneceſſary and intolerable burden; when legal taxes, for ſupporting the places conſecrated to the worſhip of God, are ſubmitted to with the moſt obvious reluctancy, and defrayed with the utmoſt poſſible parſimony; while far heavier impoſitions, in ſupport of expenſive amuſements, are voluntarily agreed to, and laid out with the greateſt liberality and chearfulneſs; are not all theſe appearances, and which too are every day increaſing, too evident a proof, that we are become "lovers of pleaſures, more than "lovers of God?" This leads me to obſerve,

3. That a people immerſed in luxury and voluptuouſneſs, muſt certainly be declining in their religious and moral character. A ſpirit of levity and diſſipation is quite inconſiſtent with the wiſe and manly ſpirit of religion. The only lawful and laudable end of amuſements, in general, is to unbend and relax the mind from its more important purſuits;

to renew its ſtrength and vigour, for proſecuting, with greater facility, the great purpoſes of our being. Here is the proper boundary, which we cannot tranſgreſs, not only without blame, but without prejudice to our beſt intereſts. When, therefore, amuſements, even the moſt innocent, become the only ſerious buſineſs of life; when the taſte runs ſo high, as to comprehend every diſtinction of age, condition, or character; when improvements in this way are purſued as the moſt ſucceſsful road to fame; may it not be ſaid of us, in the words of the Apoſtle James, That "we live in pleaſure, and are "waxen wanton?" Is it poſſible that perſons engaged in ſuch a courſe of idleneſs and diſſipation, and whoſe whole life is a circle of vain and trifling amuſements, ſhould ever find themſelves at leiſure, or diſpoſed, to think of their condition in a future world, or the means of ſecuring a happy eternity?

But would to God we could ſay nothing worſe of many favourite amuſements in vogue, than that they are light and trifling. Are not ſome of them the greateſt ſnares to virtue, and incitements to the baſeſt paſſions? I mean, the prevailing paſſion for lucrative gaming, now become the occupation, not merely of idle vagrants of the vulgar tribe, as in former times, but of too many of their ſuperiors in rank and fortune. It is a paſſion which has a direct tendency to extinguiſh the nobleſt virtues, and to cheriſh the meaneſt

vices,

vices, in the heart. Juſtice and candour, benevolence and generoſity, the principles of honour and friendſhip, and even natural affection, are quickly ſupplanted by covetouſneſs, envy, and capricious anger: a ſordid and inſatiable thirſt for gain takes entire poſſeſſion of the ſoul; every degree of public ſpirit, every humane and generous ſentiment, is rooted out, or ſuppreſſed, by a mean ſelfiſhneſs which governs all: the important duties of civil and domeſtic life, the public and private exerciſes of divine worſhip, ſo neceſſary to preſerve a ſenſe of religion in the minds of men, are neglected, for the ſake of amuſements, frivolous in their nature, and fatal in their conſequences.

III. I ſhall conclude with ſuggeſting ſome things, which, if ſeriouſly attended to, might prove, through the divine bleſſing, an effectual remedy againſt ſuch diſorders, and conducive to revive a ſpirit of true piety and virtue amongſt us.

1. The early inſtruction of youth in the principles of divine truth and wiſdom, merits ſurely the firſt conſideration. Here the foundation of national virtue muſt be laid; without which, no after diſcipline and culture will much avail. When we ſeriouſly conſider the unhappy bias of our minds to error and vice, it is highly proper to give children an early prepoſſeſſion in favour of religion, and that from the very firſt diſplay of thought; be-

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cauſe reaſon will very ſoon confirm it into a moral habit and conſtitution of mind. Parents, and all tutors of youth, ought carefully to defend children againſt the firſt impreſſions of impiety, and endeavour to inſpire them with a reverence for religion, even before they are capable of underſtanding its nature, or the various obligations reſulting from it. It muſt be of great uſe to prevent corrupt principles and intemperate paſſions from taking poſſeſſion of the mind, and to check their firſt appearance before they gather ſtrength, and are confirmed by habit.

Let them particularly, with a becoming zeal, reſtrain and diſcourage all ſort of language that ſavours of impiety or profaneneſs; by which the name and honour of the Deity is inſulted, and his authority contemned. The neglect of this ſingle circumſtance is ſufficient, of itſelf, to harden the heart againſt all ſerious impreſſions of religious truths to the very end of life.

I cannot pretend, at preſent, to lay down a full and particular plan of religious education, but only to point out ſome dangerous miſtakes, which ſhould be carefully avoided. For inſtance, While parents and teachers are at due pains to inſtruct youth in the fundamental principles of natural and revealed religion, let them, at the ſame time, carefully guard againſt inſpiring them with a blind and intemperate zeal for the diſtinguiſhing tenets of a particular party, or a violent averſion to all

all who differ from them. The common effect of such a narrow and injudicious education, is either to prejudice them against religion in general, as merely a subject of debate and wrangling; or to train them up in a habit of contention, and thus to cherish a bitter and uncharitable spirit, quite opposite to the meek and peaceable spirit of the gospel.

And to all this let them not fail to add a truly pious and virtuous example; which will most efficaciously convince them of the truth and excellence of religion, as well as give force and energy to their instructions. Thus the natural affection of children will co-operate with parental authority, in carrying on their religious improvement. This is an instance of zeal for true religion, not only of the greatest importance in itself, but also within the sphere of the generality to exhibit, and is equally productive of public and private happiness.

2. The countenance and example of persons in higher stations of life, on the side of religion, would be of the greatest efficacy to revive a spirit of true piety and virtue, and diffuse it through the inferior ranks of men. The principles and practice of the great are extremely diffusive in their influence, especially if unhappily favourable to impiety and vice: their flatterers and dependents, from servility, conform to their masters; and the poison gradually spreads through all the intermediate

termediate orders. Thus irreligion may, in time, become even popular and prevailing; its infamy, in ſome ſenſe, be taken away; and the ſcandal ſeem rather to lie on the ſide of religion and virtue. Nothing then would prove ſo ſovereign and effectual a remedy for this growing evil, as the good example of men of power and influence. This would ſoon bring the ſtudy and practice of religion into repute; acts of impiety and profaneneſs would become matter of ſhame and reproach in the eyes of men, as they are always offenſive to God.

It deſerves to be remembered, to their everlaſting honour, that it was chiefly owing, under God, to the noble and ſpirited zeal of our great men, that our happy Reformation from the corruptions of Popery was ſucceſsfully brought about. And we may ſafely add, that it is only by a revival of the ſame laudable and excellent ſpirit, that we can reaſonably hope to ſee the practice of true piety and virtue again flouriſh amongſt us. This would ſecure them a more glorious fame than the heroes of ancient times acquired by their valorous achievements, and perpetuate their honour through eternity itſelf.

We have ſurely reaſon to bleſs God, that, even in this age of pleaſure and diſſipation, we have yet ſome eminent examples of real piety and virtue amongſt the greateſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed of our countrymen in point of rank and condition; who are not

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aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, and whoſe praiſe is not of men only, but of God: that particularly the higheſt perſonage in the kingdom is not more diſtinguiſhed by his Princely than his Chriſtian virtues. Who knows how far the influence of ſuch examples may at length extend? Would not a juſt ſenſe of religion revived amongſt us, prove the moſt effectual remedy of thoſe public diſorders, which are but too frequent, and have become an object of ſerious attention? By this means a turbulent and ſeditious ſpirit would ceaſe among the people, their ſuperiors in rank and power would regain their influence over them; to the loſs of which, too often chargeable on themſelves, I apprehend, our preſent commotions may more juſtly be traced back, than to any other cauſe that has been aſſigned.

Laſtly, Much will ever depend on us, my Reverend Brethren of the clergy, for reviving a ſpirit of true piety and virtue among the people. Of all the different claſſes of men, we are ſurely capable of doing the greateſt ſervice or prejudice to the intereſts of true religion. I ſhould almoſt think it unneceſſary to ſay, that we ought carefully to preſerve ourſelves, not only from the guilt, but even the ſuſpicion of impiety or wickedneſs; becauſe ſuch a character, in a miniſter of Chriſt, is, at firſt ſight, and in the eyes of all men, abſurd and deteſtable. And I think it but juſtice to obſerve on this occaſion, that

in this national church inſtances of this ſort leſs frequently occur, or are ſuffered to paſs with impunity, than in any other. Although, in ſome few caſes, the guilty may poſſibly eſcape deſerved cenſure, it is no more than what muſt ſometimes happen in judicatories made up of fallible men. At the ſame time, there is certainly nothing which more deſerves the ſtricteſt attention, than to preſerve the reputation of our church for purity of manners; a reputation which we ſtill poſſeſs, and, I hope, will maintain to lateſt ages. Some other churches may boaſt of their riches and power, and thereby acquire an exterior pomp and luſtre; but we muſt ſtand or fall, in the eſtimation of mankind, by the purity of our faith and morals, and an unremitting diligence in the duties of our ſacred office.

But is merely abſtaining from groſſer vices and offences all that our public character requires, or the world expects from us? Surely not. An exalted piety, and exemplary virtue, are not only highly ornamental, but abſolutely neceſſary, to add dignity to our character, and efficacy to our religious inſtructions. Such a general temper and deportment will be always looked for from us, as becomes thoſe who have a high ſtandard of moral excellence continually before their eyes. Every man of common diſcernment, can eaſily diſtinguiſh the peculiar ſpirit of public profeſſions, and thoſe who are poſſeſſed

ed of it in an eminent degree. Attention to this is neceſſary in every profeſſion, not only to the reputation of men, but to their ſucceſs in proſecuting the end they have in view. And be aſſured of it, my brethren, the world is at no loſs to judge, and with preciſion too, when we deviate from the ſpirit and rules of our ſacred office. Allow me to ſay, that whatever ſavours of levity and folly ſhould be carefully avoided, if we would act up to the dignity of our character, and be of real ſervice to mankind; as it always betrays want of judgement and prudence, and muſt thereby diminiſh the influence of our inſtructions, in proportion as it ſinks us in the eſteem of the public.

To conclude: Let us endeavour to revive a ſpirit of true piety and religion in ourſelves; and who knows how far and wide its ſalutary influence may extend? Let us carefully ſuppreſs a ſpirit of faction and party, ſo deſtructive of our mutual union; and amidſt unavoidable differences of opinion, about queſtions reſpecting public order, let us ſtill preſerve "the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of "peace." We are like "a city ſet on a hill, "that cannot be hid." Our virtues and vices, and even our defects and infirmities, are more viſible and ſtriking than thoſe of other men. Let therefore our general temper and deportment favour of true piety, as becomes thoſe who are addicted to the contemplation

of ſpiritual and divine objects, and alienated from the vanities, as well as the corruptions, of the world. "Bleſſed is that wiſe and faith-"ful ſervant, whoſe Lord, when he cometh, "ſhall find ſo doing."

SER-

SERMON XIV.

The Peace of the Grave.

By JOHN MACKENZIE, V. D. M.

JOB, iii. 17. 18. 19.

There the wicked ceaſe from troubling; and there the weary be at reſt.
There the priſoners reſt together, they hear not the voice of the oppreſſor.
The ſmall and great are there, and the ſervant is free from his maſter.

WHENEVER we are ſeriouſly diſpoſed to turn our thoughts upon death, no view of that awful ſubject is more apt to ſtrike us, than the complete equality which it introduces among the different ranks and conditions of human life; at the ſame time, no view of it is more affecting, nor is there any ſource from which we may derive more important conſequences. The rivers and ſtreams which run along the ſurface of this globe are all equal in their original, whether we conſider them in themſelves, or in the common cauſes from which they all ariſe Some puny fount, or contiguous mountain, taught them at firſt to flow; but, in their courſes along

the earth, they ſoon become diſtinguiſhed, and by a thouſand accidents. Some, ſcarce iſſued from their parent urns, are ſwelled with ſnows, and augmented by the continual acceſſion of numerous ſtreams; till, at laſt, aſſembled from all quarters into mighty bodies, they roll over the world with ſuperior majeſty. Others, unaided by theſe accidental cauſes, admit but ſmall increaſe, and run along in the ſame humble channel. This diſtinction, however, is not of long duration: they are all to meet finally in one place. After having run their appointed courſes, and diſplayed, for ſome little time, their different forces, they fall all into the ſea, their common receptacle. Here their waters are blended, their courſes loſt, and even their names unknown. Thus, as they were equal in their original, they are again equal in their end. — This is a juſt reſemblance of human life. Men, as they ſtand in nature, are equal: they are equal, when they firſt iſſue into life, in every material circumſtance; but, as they proceed, this equality is gradually diminiſhed; it is at laſt ſeemingly altogether deſtroyed, and becomes to common eyes inviſible. Some, in the courſe of their progreſs, are augmented with riches, with birth, with honours, titles, and fame; others are endowed with none of all theſe acquiſitions, but continue in their firſt humble obſcurity. Some, again, are happy, are fortunate, live in the midſt of eaſe, of health, of mirth, and jovial pleaſures; others

others are unhappy, are unfortunate, preſſed by many calamities, have their health impaired, and their ſpirits broken. Thus the original equality of nature is deſtroyed by various cauſes. But neither does this ſtate of things continue long. A few years of this ſcenery elapſed, and death reſtores this equality again, and renders the appearance of human affairs once more uniform. In the grave all the diſtinctions of life ceaſe, Nature reſumes her rights, and all things are brought back once more to their original level.

Now this view of the event is infinitely intereſting to two oppoſite ſets of men, though in a different way, and for contrary reaſons. To thoſe who are ſufferers by the preſent inequality which prevails in life, the proſpect of its abolition muſt be a favourite ſubject of contemplation. It muſt be ſo in a ſtill higher degree, when their ſufferings are brought upon them by the oppreſſive exertions of human power; and when they conſider it as not only delivering them from their troubles, and placing them beyond the reach of their oppreſſors; but as diſarming their oppreſſors themſelves of that power which they ſo greatly abuſed, and reducing them to a level with thoſe over whom they tyrannized. This, indeed, is that hoped-for event which conſoles them in the midſt of their misfortunes; and which, in the hours of their bittereſt anguiſh, they ſigh after with unextinguiſhable ardour. How juſt, then, how infinitely pathetic and beautiful

tiful is this meditation of Job in our text? how deeply founded in the moſt original feelings of our nature? Overwhelmed with miſery and extreme deſpair, he is repreſented as looking forward to the grave as his laſt reſource; conſidering it as a place where the long loſt equality of nature ſhall be again reſtored, where the troubled in heart ſhall breathe from their calamities, where the wicked ſhall ceaſe from oppreſſing, where the wēary ſhall reſt from all their woes, where the long-confined priſoners ſhall be ſet at liberty, where the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the maſter and his ſervant, ſhall all ſit together, in the ſame general repoſe, without rules, without rank, or precedence. To the oppoſite claſs of men again, to thoſe who are gainers by the preſent inequality, the event muſt appear in a different light, and produce a different effect upon their ſentiments. But, in this diſcourſe, we ſhall confine ourſelves, with Job, to the firſt claſs, and conſider the grave in the ſingle light of a relief to the oppreſſed.

In diſcourſing farther, therefore, on this ſubject, I ſhall follow the order of the text, and obſerve the following method.

1. I ſhall conſider the grave as a place where the wicked ceaſe from troubling.

2. I ſhall conſider it as a place where the weary are at reſt.

3. I ſhall conſider it as a place where the diſtinctions of life are levelled, where ſocie-

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ty returns to its firſt principles, where Nature reſumes her rights, and every man is replaced in his original equality.

I. In the firſt place, I am to conſider the grave as a place where the wicked ceaſe from troubling.

I mean not at preſent to addreſs the diſſipated and the gay. Unacquainted, by their own experience, with the troubles of life, they can know them only by the information of others; and this information, ſhould any one be ſingular enough to offer it, they may liſten to or not as they are diſpoſed. The troubling of the wicked is heard at a diſtance, and affects not their repoſe. It may ceaſe or continue without diſturbing their ſyſtem, or producing any material change upon their ſentiments. It is you, my brethren, who, like myſelf, have been tried in trouble, whom I now mean to addreſs. Come, then, and let us deſcend together into the grave; let us viſit the ſilent kingdom, and draw comfort from thoſe regions where the wicked only can deſpair. If we may judge of the purpoſes of Providence by the events of life, this world was not made for *us*, nor have we reaſon to conſider it as our portion.

And, in the firſt place, in viewing the kingdom of the dead, obſerve the profound quiet that reigns there. More ſtill than the unruffled ſurface of the deep, the face of this mighty empire is tranquil, and all is ſolitude and ſilence.

lence. Here is no invaſion of property, nor a diſpute about the limits which divide one man's territory from another. Every inhabitant poſſeſſes his own narrow houſe, nor feels a wiſh, nor can make a motion, to tranſport himſelf into that of his neighbour. Is ſtrife then ceaſed? is diſcord no more? can the wicked no longer trouble? No, my friends, they can trouble no more. Hitherto they have been permitted to come, but they can go no farther. In like manner ſhall *your* oppreſſors be alſo laid low; in like manner ſhall *they* ceaſe from troubling, and you ſhall be delivered. That dreadful voice which yet ſounds in your ears ſhall fail, nor be able to awaken even the faint echo of the tomb. Where, ye mighty! is now your power? Ye oppreſſors! is your rage diſarmed? Do ye at laſt know yourſelves to be but men? And can you reſpect the ſituation of thoſe over whom fortune hath given you the advantage? can you ceaſe to inſult them? No; but Death hath interpoſed, and his ſtern order muſt be complied with; whether you incline or not, you muſt reſign your power, and ceaſe from your oppreſſion.

Of all the appearances which this world exhibits, there is none which, if properly conſidered, affords a larger fund of mortifying ſpeculation, than to ſee one man preſuming to oppreſs another. In a mind merely philoſophical, it raiſes curioſity; in a mind ſenſible and honeſt, it excites ſurpriſe; in a mind capable of the noble reſentment of virtue, it

rouſes

rouſes indignation. Aſk that man who ſqueezes the hard-wrought labourer, and drives his wretched family from their little habitation, what right he has to oppreſs his brethren? Aſk him, if the man he oppreſſes has not ſome title to the fruits of the earth as well as himſelf? Aſk him what the unhappy creature has done to forfeit it? and who made *him* the judge of his demerit? He will tell you, if he thinks your queſtion deſerves an anſwer, that the land is *his*, and that he may do with his *own* what he pleaſes. Aſk him, then, if compaſſion at leaſt be not a duty? and if there is not a greater pleaſure in doing good than evil? Aſk him, if it be not an agreeable thing to make the people whom Heaven has put under his protection happy? and what poſſible pleaſure he can receive from expoſing a family to miſery? O, he will tell you, they are idle, and unworthy of favour. This, I grant it, may be true in ſome inſtances; but I fear that, in general, it is oftener an apology for oppreſſion. The lurking motive more commonly is, (and let me ſay it is a baſe one), that the great man wants to put a little money into his pocket. How mean is this! how deſpicable in a man of his appearance! how contrary to every principle of juſtice and ſociety! let me dare to add, how oppoſite to every intention of God! In another light, how poor is the advantage which reſults to himſelf? That which he pares away in this manner from the earnings of the poor, cannot

not make *him* more happy, though it ruins the family it is taken from.

I ſaid, it was contrary to every principle of ſociety, and to every intention of God. If there is a propoſition which reaſon can demonſtrate, if there is a doctrine which ſcripture is expreſs upon, it is this, That the powerful men of this world are the agents of Providence; that they are intruſted with the ſtores of heaven, not for their own ſakes only, but for the benefit of the multitude. How elſe will you juſtify the ways of Providence, or account for that manifeſt partiality which it has ſhown to ſome men in preference to others? If reaſon and conſcience have any weight, and the ſcriptures of God themſelves are not the productions of a party; every man poſſeſſed of property or power is abſolutely accountable, in this very light, for the uſe which he makes of his poſſeſſions. But as if this were not ſufficient, and Nature were ſtill ſuſpicious that her intentions might be miſtaken; as an additional motive to diſpenſe her favours properly, there is a pleaſure annexed to the action itſelf more exquiſite than even the heart which has felt it can conceive. Can there be a pleaſure more ſublime than to make a generous uſe of our poſſeſſions;—to raiſe the fallen; to ſoothe the feelings of diſtreſs; to relieve modeſt merit when it ſtruggles with adverſity; to ſee the eyes of men kindle into kindneſs at your approach; to hear families who owe their being to your goodneſs, bleſs your

your name, and purſue you with their praiſes?

Human nature has been ſometimes taxed with ingratitude, but in moſt caſes unjuſtly. This vice, I will be bold to ſay, is not a general failing; and the obſervation, That a man whom you have loaded with favours is uneaſy under the weight, and becomes your enemy, becauſe he cannot repay them, is the maxim of a malignant philoſophy, unſupported by reaſon or experience. The fact more commonly is, that few favours are done in this world but from ſelfiſh motives; and when your benefactor receives not the return he expected, (which perhaps it is not in your power to give), he is diſappointed and chagrined. This is not benevolence. On the part of the beſtower, it is an abſolute bargain for value to be received; it is taking a man at an advantage, and making your own terms with him; it is a tacit compact, but to which you are often ſo far from aſſenting, that you even have not a ſuſpicion of the motive. A diſintereſted benefactor is never diſappointed: it is a higher pleaſure to give than to receive. I maintain, that, ſetting gratitude without the queſtion, good offices reward themſelves; and that, if nature is not forced, every return even will follow which is in the power of an obliged heart to make. The ingratitude of mankind, when it is adduced as a reaſon for with-holding favours, is a pretence invented by the ſelfiſh to excuſe their own conduct to the world: it has been invented, and is made

uſe of, by thoſe who never knew the pleaſure of a generous action, and who would charge their own inſenſibility, and the inſtances of their oppreſſion, upon the vices of mankind.

But, my brethren, (for I will ſtill preſume to call you ſo), if theſe motives affect you not, let me ſuggeſt one which you muſt feel. In ſo ſhort a life as this, why would you oppreſs? Before you have well opened the ſcene, death will cloſe it, and divide you from the fruits of your oppreſſion. If you cannot think of beſtowing favours, at leaſt abſtain from injury. You will not long enjoy the pleaſure (if you think it one) of hearing the widow mourn. Before you can tear his garment from the orphan, before he is reduced to ſuch a ſtate, as to render your enjoyment complete, the deluſion flies, you yourſelves are low, and need that mercy which you now refuſe to others. See the grave itſelf is moved, and ſtands open to receive you. Yes, my afflicted friends, the period of their oppreſſion is ſhort; and the more violently they drive, the more rapidly will they approach to the end of their courſe. There they will ceaſe from troubling; their inexorable hearts will beat no more; you will be delivered from their dominion. Free among the dead, you will enjoy that repoſe you were deprived of here, nor ever more be ſubjected to their authority. For,

II. The

II. The grave is a place where the weary are at reſt. How ſoothing is this ſentiment, The weary are at reſt? There is ſomething in the expreſſion which affects the heart with uncommon ſenſations, and produces a ſpecies of delight, where tranquillity is the principal ingredient. The ſentiment itſelf is extenſive, and implies many particulars: it implies not only that we are delivered from the troubling of the wicked, as in the former clauſe; but from every trouble, and every pain, to which life is ſubjected. Thoſe only who have themſelves been tried in affliction, can feel the full force of this expreſſion. Others may be pleaſed with the ſentiment, and affected by ſympathy. The diſtreſſed are at once pleaſed and comforted. — To be delivered from trouble! — to be relieved from power! — to ſee oppreſſion humbled! — to be freed from care and pain, from ſickneſs and diſtreſs! — to lie down as in a bed of ſecurity, in a long oblivion of our woes! — to ſleep in peace, without the fear of interruption! — How pleaſing is the proſpect! how full of conſolation! The ocean may roll its waves, — the warring winds may join their forces, — the thunders may ſhake the ſkies, and the lightnings paſs ſwiftly from cloud to cloud: but not the forces of the elements combined, not the ſounds of thunder, nor of many ſeas, though they were united into one peal, and directed to one point, can ſhake the ſecurity of the tomb. The dead hear nothing of the tumult;

they ſleep ſoundly; they reſt from their calamities upon beds of peace. Conducted to ſilent manſions, they cannot be troubled by the rudeſt aſſaults, nor awakened by the loudeſt clamour. The unfortunate, the oppreſſed, the broken-hearted, with thoſe that have languiſhed on beds of ſickneſs, reſt here together: they have forgot their diſtreſſes; every ſorrow is huſhed, and every pang extinguiſhed.

Hence, in all nations, a ſet of names have ariſen to convey the idea of death, congenial with theſe ſentiments, and all of them expreſſive of ſupreme felicity and conſolation. — How does the human mind, preſſed by real or imagined calamities, delight to dwell upon that awful event which leads to deliverance, and to deſcribe and ſolicit it with the faireſt flowers of fancy! It is called the harbour of reſt, in whoſe deep boſom the diſaſtered mariner, who had long ſuſtained the aſſaults of adverſe ſtorms, moors his wearied veſſel, never more to return to the toſſings of the waſteful ocean. It is called the land of peace, whither the friendleſs exile retires, beyond the reach of malice and injuſtice, and the cruelleſt arrows of fortune. It is called the hoſpitable houſe, where the weather-beaten traveller, faint with traverſing pathleſs deſerts, finds a welcome and ſecure repoſe. There no cares moleſt, no paſſions diſtract, no enemies defame; there agonizing pain, and wounding infamy, and ruthleſs revenge, are no more;

more; but profound peace, and calm paſſions, and ſecurity which is immoveable. "There," ſays Job, "the wicked ceaſe from "troubling, there the weary are at reſt! "There the priſoners reſt together! they "hear not the voice of the oppreſſor! The "ſmall and the great are there, and the ſer-"vant is free from his maſter!" It is in this manner that the human mind, whoſe operations are all conducted by the moſt curious mechaniſm, rejoices at the proſpect of death, when it images to itſelf the reverſion of its calamities.

III. I OBSERVE, then, in the laſt place, that the grave is a place where the diſtinctions of life are levelled, where ſociety returns to its firſt principles, where Nature reſumes her rights, and where every man is replaced in his original equality.

Next to the influence of our paſſions, moſt of the calamities which man inflicts on man, ariſe from the unequal, though neceſſary, diſtribution of property and power. Dazzled with riches and diſtinctions, we are apt to conſider ourſelves, when we obtain poſſeſſion, not as men appointed to collect and preſide over the common ſtores of Providence, but as undoubted heirs of excluſive advantages, and ſuperior, in the very nature of things, to the general maſs of mankind. Than this there cannot be an error more fatal, either in theory or in life. This vaſt globe on which

we ſtand, is inhabited by millions of rational creatures, who have all an equal right to her productions. But as it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, that we can *all* poſſeſs; and as a greater ſum-total of happineſs is produced by the preſent arrangement; it hath pleaſed the policy of Providence to put this earth, with her productions, under the direction of a few, who manage, under God, for the greater good of the whole. This is the original of all property and power, and the final ends which Providence propoſes to accompliſh from the preſent inequality in theſe circumſtances which prevails among men. And, conſidered in this view, the policy is moſt benevolent, as well as profound. The diſtinction of ranks, the ſubordination among men, and the reverence for power, when confined within their proper limits, and the ends of their inſtitution kept in view, are all very neceſſary in our ſyſtem. But the amazement of a contemplative man proceeds from this, that theſe lords of the earth, who know themſelves to be but men, and whoſe hearts are conſequently in the ſecret, ſhould, from this circumſtance, take occaſion to become tyrannical, and convert the very depoſits of Providence into inſtruments of oppreſſion; — that, forgetting the ends of their pre-eminence, they ſhould miſtake *poſſeſſion* for *right*, and act as if this world, with its inhabitants and productions, was created for their private advantage; — that, miſtaking *property* for *power*, they ſhould

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erect themſelves into taſk-maſters, and make impious war upon the freedom of the ſpecies. The advantages of ſociety, though numerous, make perhaps but poor amends for the conſequences which follow when her principles are thus corrupted; — when the ſelfiſh and tyrannical diſpoſitions find themſelves protected by power, and the original equality of men is forgotten or diſclaimed. Hence the inſolence of office, the ſenſeleſs vanity of birth, the ſelf-importance of riches, the mean language of flattery, and the groans of the oppreſſed, which ſound from all quarters of the earth. Nor does the evil ſtop at private life. It is the ſource of half the vices which overwhelm the globe. Here Avarice borrows his all-ingroſſing meaſure, Pride his ſupercilious brow, and Ambition his torch, with which he ſets the world on fire. By theſe the earth is laid waſte, our nature debaſed, the ſpecies enſlaved, the rights of mankind are raviſhed, and the ſacred fire of liberty is extinguiſhed in ſtreams of human blood. — Let none imagine, that I mean to confine this abuſe to that claſs of men whom we call the great. It is the conſequence of power of every ſize, be it great or ſmall, in high life or in low. It is a general, but mortifying remark, that no man, or ſet of men, were ever yet inveſted with unlimited privileges, which they did not wanton with and abuſe. It is aſtoniſhing to obſerve, that, even whatever may have been his former circumſtances, a man no ſooner finds

finds himself possessed of a little power, than he forgets the purposes for which it was bestowed, and converts it to the oppression of his brethren. However humbling the reflection, it is a fact, that, generally speaking, those who *have* power, and those who have none, are actuated by the same principles; and the difference between the two classes appears, from multiplied experiments, to be a mere difference of situation. This is a general remark upon the human character. To-day we suffer, to-morrow we oppress. Vain man! how soon, and by what slight accidents, is his reason overturned! He first, with many a weary step, and many an anxious prayer to Heaven for success, pursues some favourite scheme of happiness. What vows does he not make, that, if Providence will but assist his endeavours, he will for ever retain a grateful remembrance of the benefit? But he has no sooner obtained this object of his wishes, than, forgetting all his prayers, and vows of gratitude, he presumptuously ascribes the whole to his own merit; boldly arrogates the partial indulgence of Heaven to himself as his right; and, proceeding from one step of pride, of oppression, and folly, to another, he shakes aloft the rod of power, makes himself a god in his own imagination, and forgets that men are his fellow-creatures.

From a review of the miseries of human life, as well those which arise from the present inequality of power among mankind, as those

thoſe which ariſe from the unequal diſtribution of happineſs itſelf, men of warm fancies, and generous diſpoſitions, have been led to imagine, that human affairs were not always in this ſituation. They have too haſtily perhaps concluded, that a ſcene ſuch as this world at preſent exhibits, could not come originally from the hands of an all-benevolent God; — that it muſt have ſucceeded in conſequence of ſome deep and remarkable corruption. They have imagined a golden age, when men lived as they came from the hands of their creator, free, fearleſs, innocent, virtuous, and independent. Then, ſay they, were there no wars to deſolate the world, nor no frauds put in practice among brethren. The ſeeds of animoſity were not yet ſown, nor was the ſoil prepared to receive them: no deceit lurked in the heart, no cloud darkened the brow; but man met man with erect countenances, the conſequence of freedom, of innocence, of mutual confidence, and of independence. The furious paſſions which lay waſte the human conſtitution, had not yet begun their ruinous progreſs. Anger, envy, revenge, ambition, and criminal love, were not known. Nor had Luxury as yet invented her fatal arts, to enervate the mind, and to rack the body with acute diſeaſes; nor were the neceſſaries of life procured, as now, with ſweat and labour. Men lived ſimply. Reclined at their eaſe, beneath ſhady trees, or by the ſide of brooks and ſtreams, the firſt inhabitants of the earth

earth led lives devoted to love, to joy, and innocence. And as all the paſſions were tuned to harmony within, ſo the elements without were in perfect concord with theſe delightful movements. No cloud deformed the face of heaven, no ſtorm had as yet gathered over the affrighted mariner, no thunders had been heard to roll; the ſun ſhone ſerenely, the gales blew ſoftly, the face of the deep was placid, there was an eternal ſpring, and every heart beat with joy, and all nature was filled with happineſs. Such, they imagine, were the ſcenes of the firſt men, and ſuch is the felicity which the human heart ſo paſſionately deſires.

But while we ſoothe our minds, by looking back to a happineſs which (if ever it exiſted) is now no more; it will afford us higher conſolation to look forward to a ſtate which really lies before us. Before us lies a peaceful empire, where the miſeries of life are huſhed, and where all the cauſes which agitate this upper world are deſtroyed. In the grave, all the diſtinctions of life ceaſe, Nature reſumes her rights, and all things are brought back once more to their original level. Human life returns here to the point from which it at firſt ſet out; it ends where it began, and corrects all its deviations. The ſons of Nature reſume their firſt equality, and take poſſeſſion of their places without diſtinction. Riches and power, rank and ſplendour, influence and ambition, every circumſtance which gave one man power

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over another, and enabled him to abuſe it, diſappear for ever. The rich and the poor are not now diſtinguiſhed; the humble and the great unite; the ſucceſsful warrior and the peaceful peaſant meet in one place, and mingle their duſt together; the groans of the nations ceaſe, the oppreſſed are freed, their grim tyrants retire, Nature aſſerts her firſt rights, and the whole world meet once more upon equal terms, and appear upon the ſame level. How ſingular, how entirely novel, is the ſcene? Eſcaped from the ſtorms of life, they appear with ghaſtly viſages, like men worn with ſervice, and exhauſted with the conflict. At this ſolemn meeting, the nations ſeem ſtruck with ſilence, deep, long, and profound, which remains uninterrupted, and which no future accident can tempt them afterwards to violate. What an awful appearance! and how intereſting is the ſituation! It is the winding up of the preſent ſtate, and the laſt ſcene which Nature exhibits to her children; it enables us at laſt to eſtimate the real value of the world: thoſe who would not obſerve it ſooner, muſt obſerve it now, and draw the proper concluſions.

Thus, Chriſtians, I have treated this ſubject under the ſeveral heads propoſed. I have endeavoured to exhibit to your view the moſt intereſting ſpectacle which you can contemplate. I have deſcribed the mixed condition of the preſent ſtate; as conſiſting of power and

and ſubjection, of happineſs and affliction, of oppreſſion and of ſuffering. I have noticed alſo the final end and mighty winding up of the whole ſcene. You have ſeen all the diſtinctions of this lower world levelled at once, the original equality of men reſtored, and human labours and human ſufferings conducted to a period. — What, then, are the juſt concluſions? and what is the improvement we may draw from a ſubject ſo intereſting?

In the *firſt* place, You who are ready to ſink under the calamities of life! be comforted. The day of your deliverance draweth nigh, the morning of your ſalvation, which you are now ſo ardently ſoliciting. There is only one circumſtance which can diſappoint your deſires, and that is vice. A glorious redemption awaits you beyond the grave; render not yourſelves unworthy of it.

Again, You who enjoy the ſun-ſhine of fortune! be not, be not intoxicated. Vain is that pre-eminence on which your ſtate is founded. Time is faſt carrying you to the end of your enjoyments, and nothing can avail you but virtue.

In the *next* place, Let us learn, from a review of the whole ſubject, not to value ourſelves by our ſituations in this life. Theſe ſituations are neceſſary, and it is neceſſary that *ſome* ſhould fill them. It would ſeem, that God hath varied our circumſtances, that human nature may have an opportunity of diſplaying itſelf in every ſituation. To be ſlaviſh

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in adverſity, is improper; to be inſolent in proſperity, is ridiculous. The only circumſtance which we ought to be ſolicitous about in every ſituation, is our own conduct. This will ſurvive when diſtinctions of every other nature are deſtroyed, when the heavens themſelves are no more, and when all nature ſhall ſink in one common deſolation.

I obſerve, *fourthly*, That the human underſtanding can hardly engage in a ſpeculation which affords it not an additional proof of the benevolence of God. There cannot poſſibly be a ſtronger, nor a more ſingular inſtance of this, than the preſent. I would have you obſerve it with attention.—The evils of life have been long, and, in one ſenſe, juſtly complained of. We cannot pretend, perhaps, to ſay from what ſource they ariſe, or what certain good purpoſe they were intended to anſwer in the creation. They muſt be neceſſary, otherwiſe they would have no place in the ſyſtem. But one remark is ſtriking, and demands your attention. The greateſt calamities, what we would call the pureſt and moſt poſitive evils, are qualified with a proportion of happineſs; and ſuch a proportion as enables a man, almoſt on every occaſion, to endure them; and, on ſome occaſions, even to riſe ſuperior to them, and deſpiſe them. Death itſelf, the greateſt calamity which can befal our ſpecies, is not without its conſolations. It puts an end, indeed, to our exiſtence here; but does it not, at the

ſame time, put an end to our pains? Does it not huſh our cares, bury our misfortunes, and deſtroy our miſtakes for ever from our remembrance? The wicked ceaſe from troubling, the weary reſt; every diſtinction of life, and ſource of oppreſſion, is levelled, and forgotten. — Yet, I muſt confeſs, there is ſomething mournful, as well as pleaſing, in the proſpect. The weary reſt in the *grave*. Is *this*, then, the end of their toils? is it the laſt retreat of their virtue? Are all their ſchemes, their hopes and fears, their cares and proſpects, ſhrunk within this little meaſure? Tell me, Chriſtians, do you not here ſee the neceſſity of a ſtate of future exiſtence? Do you not ſee the goodneſs, as well as juſtice, of God, in providing it? Without *this*, the repoſe of the grave, peaceful as it is, would afford but a mournful conſolation. It is this which brightens the proſpect, and completes the hopes, of the unfortunate. We ſhall live, and meet again; the ſeparation is not eternal; we ſhall meet on a ſafer ſhore, where the wicked ſhall not trouble, where care and pain ſhall ceaſe, and every affliction be forgotten.

I obſerve, then, *laſtly*, what a ſource of conſolation is the belief of a future ſtate itſelf to the afflicted? Whoever ſeriouſly reflects upon human life, muſt ſee the amazing utility of this doctrine; he muſt even ſee its abſolute neceſſity. The afflictions of life (indeed in every ſituation) are ſo many, often

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ſo grievous, and the ſenſibility of an honeſt heart ſtruggling with unmerited calamity, is ſo great, that, unleſs Nature had given us the principle of hope, as a reſource within ourſelves, to which we might always recur in caſes of extremity, the worthieſt part of mankind would deſpair, and grow ſick of a world where they are expoſed to ſuch a weight of ſuffering, and where power, oppreſſion, and rapine, are ſo prevalent. It is a juſt obſervation, That "Man never *is*, but always *to be*, "bleſt." It is hope which makes us face difficulties, wreſtle with misfortunes, and riſe unconquered from calamities, which would otherwiſe cruſh us to the duſt, and make us cry out, in the deſpair of our hearts, "It is "better for us to die than to live." The ſame principle which accompanies and ſupports us in every diſtreſſing ſcene of life, and even prevents us often from throwing away life itſelf as an intolerable burden, carries our views into a future ſtate, and diſpoſes us irreſiſtibly to look for that happineſs *there*, which we have laboured after *here* in vain. This is the great ſweetener of human life; this is that powerful cordial which qualifies adverſity, and enables us ſtill to *live on*, amidſt numberleſs diſcouragements.

The happineſs which we purſue in this world, is deceitful and fugacious. It glitters before us like a falſe fire which embarraſſes the benighted traveller; ſtill we advance, and ſtill it flies; in vain we double our ſpeed, and reach

after what is not; the gay deluſion ſtill mocks our toil, and eludes our graſp; yet we ſtill purſue. At laſt, having ſufficiently ſported with our credulity, it evaniſhes at once, and leaves us a prey to perplexity and deſpair. Not ſo the happineſs of a future ſtate. Like a light hung out upon a ſtormy coaſt, to direct the diſtreſſed mariner, we ſteer to it through millions of ſurrounding waves. In vain the tempeſt beſets us, and Night falls with all its ſhades. We keep it ſteady in our eye through the gloom, and brave the oppoſition of the elements; ſecure that, if we can but reach the deſired haven, we ſhall find a ſhelter from the ſtorm, and an agreeable and ſafe retreat from the perils of a diſaſtrous voyage. The proſpect of that reſt beyond the grave to which the weary tend, the proſpect of that agreeable repoſe which ſhall crown the period of their toils when time to them ſhall be no more, is that animating principle which makes them deſpiſe the calamities of life, that are ſo ſoon to have an end; which makes them bear the contumely of the proud man, that muſt ſo ſoon be laid in the duſt; and which makes them endure the want of riches, of honours, and eaſe, and of all that the world accounts comfortable in life. They reflect, that the troubles of life, however grievous, cannot always continue; that power and diſtinction, however flattering, muſt ſoon diſappear, and be forgotten; that the grave is the great receptacle of human vanity, whi-

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ther ſtrength and infirmity, youth and age, beauty and deformity, are faſt carried by an irreſiſtible fatality. They reflect, that they are travelling to their proper country; a land of peace and ſecurity, a land of liberty and joy, where no grief, no vice, nor oppreſſion, nor calumny, nor contention, ſhall ever enter; where the ſlave ſhall obtain his freedom, where the priſoner ſhall break his fetters, where the weary ſhall forget their toils, where the tears of the afflicted ſhall be wiped away, where the wicked ſhall ceaſe from troubling, and where the dreadful voice of the oppreſſor ſhall never be heard any more. The thought, too, of ſo many happy ſouls, aſſembled from different quarters of the world; ſouls tried in adverſity, and united, by mutual ſympathy with one another's ſufferings, into one benevolent ſociety; — this thought, I ſay, will be full of the ſublimeſt comfort, and exceedingly heighten the conſolation. There they will find thoſe tried minds who have experienced the deep reverſes of fortune; there thoſe firm patriots who have made the welfare of mankind their care, who have ſtood amidſt the ruins of country, of friends, and family, and beheld them falling round them, without being able to afford them any aid; there they will ſee thoſe gentle ſpirits, who, without any fault of theirs, by the concurrence of unavoidable circumſtances, being plunged in deep and irretrievable diſtreſs, have, in the flower of youth and beauty, and

high expectations, seen their youth droop, their beauty fade, their friends desert them, their expectations perish, and have, at last, themselves sunk lamented to the grave, overwhelmed by a series of unforeseen calamities, and an immature prey to death; there, in short, they will see all those souls who have been familiar with distress, whom, while in life, a black cloud of misfortunes always surrounded, and whose deaths have afforded subject for many a tragical story, and drawn tears from many a listening audience. They now breath from their sufferings, they rest upon beds, they walk in full security; they now talk over their calamities at full leisure, they give and receive mutual consolation, they sweetly discourse of things past, they delight to tell, and to hear, and to repeat the history of one another's woes; what calamities they encountered, what difficulties they surmounted, and by what a long train of cruel and successive misfortunes they at last fell. Filled with these sublime ideas, and having so exalted a scene in prospect, the wretched forget their present sufferings. They overlook the short interval of life, and feel not the one half of the weight with which their misfortunes would otherwise oppress them.

But where will the tyrant dwell? and what portion is reserved for the oppressor? His mansion too awaits him, and a provision which is suited to his deservings. Darkness and Despair appear, and expand their regions

gions to receive him. He has had his portion, and he may remember the uſe he made of it. Here let us drop all conſideration of the partial ſituations of men in the preſent ſtate. Let us apply ourſelves to them as men; let us raiſe our voice in the common cauſe of humanity, and let the world give attention. For what is all this buſtle, this noiſe, this hurry, and trepidation? For what is all this wickedneſs, this expence of conſcience and good fame, this uncommon eagerneſs which men ſhow to circumvent one another? Is it, who ſhall be richeſt, who ſhall have moſt acres of land, who ſhall enjoy the higheſt place in the opinion of his frail fellow-creatures, that is the grand queſtion? For ſhame, Chriſtians! leave this trifling, this play of boys, and remember that you are immortal. There is nothing in this world of importance enough to make you wicked; there is hardly any thing in it of importance enough to engage your anxiety for a moment. Extend your views beyond this ſhadowy ſcene into the regions of eternity. Here is a real field to employ the ſolicitude of an immortal ſpirit. Even granting the objects you now ſo fondly purſue to be matters of moment in themſelves, which no wiſe man will ſay they are, the ſhortneſs of their duration reduces them again to nothing. The afflictions of life are too ſhort to be a reaſonable ground of deſpondency; the goods of this world are too precarious to be the ſubject of much va-

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nity; the rewards of wickedneſs are too tranſitory, to be conſidered, in any reſpect, as a compenſation for the important ſacrifices which muſt be made to attain them. Why, then, will we ſweat, and toil, and vex ourſelves in vain? Why will we contend to the death for the acquiſition of ſuch periſhable materials? Conſider what it is you have placed your affections on; a few grains of duſt, which an accidental breath of wind ſhall blow for ever from you. Above all, why will we be wicked? Since life is ſo frail and tranſitory, what madneſs is it to convert ſo ſhort an exiſtence into a ſcene of turbulence and oppreſſion? Ah, Chriſtians! this is not the way to be happy. Youth and life fly on haſty wings. While we live, let there be peace among us. We are brethren, we have the ſame enemies, and the ſame common calamity will overtake and overwhelm us all. The ills of life are many of them unavoidable. Let us not increaſe them by our diviſions; let us rather, while we are yet together, unite againſt the common enemies of our exiſtence; let us bear one another's burdens; let us alleviate one another's pains; let us enter cordially into one another's ſituations. What a ſcene of happineſs might this world, even in its preſent ſtate, be rendered, were men but willing to improve their opportunities? There is hardly a man ſo low in life but he has ſome of his fellow-creatures at his mercy, — ſome perſon whom he has it in his power to be

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kind to. Ah, my friends! how high is the enjoyment to contemplate the happineſs which we have been the occaſion of to others! Did you ever feel the pleaſure of doing a generous action? Did you ever feel that exalted joy which overflows the great hearts of the benevolent, when they are ſurrounded with thoſe whom they have made happy? There is not an enjoyment in this world equal to it; not the poſſeſſion of riches, not the pleaſures of beauty, nor even the charm of friendſhip. The ſelfiſh act againſt their own principles when they aſpire not after this. And, gracious God! what have thoſe to anſwer for who have had it in their power to make multitudes of their fellow-creatures happy, and have neglected the glorious, but never-to-be-retrieved, opportunity? What a heart muſt that man have to whom Heaven gave wealth and influence, as much as his ſoul could deſire, and who yet, on looking back from his death-bed upon his paſt life, can recollect no one good action which he ever did with it? If there is a power above who looks upon this life with equal eyes, muſt not a wretch like this tremble to approach him? Will he not have ſome dread, that theſe, or the like queſtions will be put to him: What, Sir, have you done with your ample fortune? Where are the hungry whom you have fed? Where are the naked whom you have clothed? Where are the priſoners whom you have relieved? Have you ever comforted

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the widow, while her loſs was ſtill recent, and the tear was yet on her cheek? Have you ever taken the orphan home, whom you have ſeen paſs by you in the moſt forlorn diſtreſs, and whoſe condition was the more to be pitied, as he knew not yet the greatneſs of his own miſery? Have you ever raiſed the worthy man whom Adverſity ſeemed to take a pleaſure in oppreſſing, and who yet could not complain, nor tell his own ſtory, in order to move compaſſion? Where is the mouth that bleſſes you? Where is the family that calls you their benefactor?

But, my brethren, let *us* never imitate ſo worthleſs an example. Be it *our* buſineſs to be kind and uſeful. O God! our common parent! inſpire us with generous and noble ſentiments; baniſh every thing that is little, every thing that is ſelfiſh and low, from our glowing boſoms. Let us reſolve this moment, that, whatever we *have* been, from henceforth we will be good and benevolent. Come, my hearers! come all, and let us ſwear eternal friendſhip. Let us promiſe, in this virtuous moment, that we never will injure one another more. Lo! Death advances with gloomy ſpeed. Already the heavens begin to lowr. Let us haſte, and do ſome good action; leſt we be overtaken before we have put our virtuous reſolutions in practice. Let us join in one ſtrict embrace, that, when the bolt comes, it may ſtrike us locked in one another's arms. Let us live like men, that we may die like Chriſtians.

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SERMON XV.

The excellency of the ſpirit of Chriſtianity.

By WILLIAM LEECHMAN, D. D.

Preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, at Edinburgh, June 5. 1767.

2 TIM. i. 7.

For God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind.

IT is very probable, that the apoſtle wrote this ſecond epiſtle to Timothy in the time of the perſecution of the Chriſtians in the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, and when he was himſelf a priſoner at Rome, and had a near proſpect of ſuffering as a martyr for his religion *. In this mournful and diſtreſſing ſituation, he addreſſes this epiſtle to Timothy. He had converted Timothy to the Chriſtian faith; he had appointed him to the

* See Dr Benſon's hiſtory of the ſtate of things when this epiſtle was written, prefixed to his paraphraſe and notes on the epiſtle.

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ſacred office of an evangeliſt, and had imparted to him the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. The apoſtle, therefore, may be conſidered in this epiſtle as giving his dying charge to his favourite diſciple, and devolving upon him the work of the goſpel before he left the world.

In the verſe before the text, he exhorts him to ſtir up the gift of God that is in him. The word in the original, which is tranſlated *ſtir up*, ſignifies properly, To blow up a fire to a more intenſe degree of heat: ſo that the meaning and import of the exhortation is, Cultivate and improve, to the beſt advantage, the ſpiritual gifts with which you are endowed; and exert all your faculties and talents to the utmoſt, in the faithful diſcharge of the duties of that great office in which you are engaged. And, in the words of the text, he enforces the exhortation from a conſideration taken from the nature and genius of Chriſtianity itſelf: verſe 7. "For God hath "not given us the ſpirit of fear; but of "power, and of love, and of a ſound mind." That is, God hath not given us Chriſtians the ſpirit of timidity and cowardice, of ſelfiſhneſs and malignity, of levity and folly; but he hath given us the ſpirit of firmneſs and courage, of benignity and love, of wiſdom and ſobriety of mind.

It appears from the verſe after the text, and from many other paſſages in this epiſtle, that the apoſtle had full in his eye thoſe labours, hardſhips,

hardſhips, and ſufferings, which he foreſaw Timothy would be called to endure in the courſe of his miniſtry. And, in this view, he exhorts him to prepare and fortify himſelf for thoſe exertions of courage and zeal, and for the exerciſe of that prudence and diſcretion, for which he would have frequent occaſion in thoſe circumſtances of perplexity, danger, and diſtreſs, in which he would find himſelf involved; and, at the ſame time, he aſſures him, that the ſpirit of the goſpel would enable him to ſuffer afflictions, and behave under them, with that patience, modeſty, and meekneſs of wiſdom, which becomes one who is perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake.

It is hoped, it will not be unſuitable to the deſign of this aſſembly, to offer ſome obſervations tending to illuſtrate and confirm the aſſertions in the text, with a view to diſplay the excellency of the goſpel, as the ſpirit of power, of love, and of a ſound mind. We ſhall conſider each of theſe in their order.

First, Chriſtianity is the ſpirit of power, or of courage and firmneſs, in oppoſition to timidity and irreſolution of mind.

Among the many other groundleſs charges which have been brought againſt Chriſtianity, it has been accuſed of inculcating ſervitude and dependence. A very celebrated author, who, in other parts of his works, appears to be a lover of the morality of the goſpel, and an admirer of the character of its great found-

er, has expreſsly aſſerted, "That the ſpirit "of the goſpel is favourable to tyrants; and "that true Chriſtians are formed for ſlaves *." And ſeveral other writers, though they admit, that the Chriſtian religion ſoftens and ſweetens the temper and manners of mankind; yet alledge, that, at the ſame time, it enervates their courage, and diſpoſes them for mean and ſlaviſh obedience.

In anſwer to theſe, and other accuſations of the like nature, let it be obſerved, in the *firſt* place, That, if we may form a judgement of the ſpirit of Chriſtianity from the ſpirit of its author, we muſt acknowledge it to be a ſpirit of courage and boldneſs, and not of fearfulneſs and timidity. For it appears, in the moſt inconteſtable manner, from the whole hiſtory of our Saviour's life, that, while he ſupported the beſt of all cauſes, he ſet himſelf, though ſingle, in a moſt intrepid manner, in oppoſition to a whole nation; and he perſevered in doing this, though he had a clear foreſight, that his doing ſo would bring him to certain death, and to a death too of the moſt formidable kind. It is hard to ſay what complete heroiſm is, if this is not an inſtance of it.

His firſt diſciples, in like manner, diſcovered a ſpirit of the moſt active and determined courage. We read, in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apoſtles, that when the

* Roſſeau, Social contract, book. 4. chap. 8.

Jewiſh

Jewiſh Sanhedrim, the ſupreme council of the nation, called the Apoſtles Peter and John before them, and commanded them, verſ. 18. "Not to teach in the name of Jeſus;" verſ. 19. "they anſwered, and ſaid unto them, Whe-"ther is it right in the ſight of God, to hark-"en unto you more than unto God, judge "ye; for we cannot but ſpeak the things we "have ſeen and heard." And they accordingly went out from the council, and preached the goſpel with all boldneſs. And we read in the ſame chapter, that even their enemies were ſtruck with admiration when they beheld the firmneſs of their reſolution: verſ. 13. "When the members of the council ſaw the "boldneſs of Peter and John, and perceived "that they were unlearned and ignorant "men, they marvelled; and they took know-"ledge of them, that they had been with "Jeſus;" that is, they perceived they had learned boldneſs and intrepidity in his ſchool.

If your time would allow us to trace the ſpirit of Chriſtianity as it appeared in the primitive Chriſtians, we ſhould find, that perſons of all ranks, ſexes, and ages, ſhewed ſuch an unſhaken firmneſs and fortitude, under the ſevereſt trials, even death itſelf, as filled their very enemies and perſecutors with aſtoniſhment.

It is worthy of obſervation, in the *ſecond* place, That, if we may judge of the ſpirit of the goſpel from the ſtrain of its precepts, we muſt alſo conclude it to be a ſpirit of reſo-

lution and fortitude. The New Teſtament abounds with the warmeſt exhortations to Chriſtians to exert the utmoſt firmneſs in withſtanding the temptations, and encountering the dangers, to which they may be expoſed. Thus, 1 Corinth. xvi. 13. "Stand faſt," ſays the apoſtle, "quit ye like men, and be ſtrong." And in the epiſtle to the Eph. chap. vi. from the 10th to the 19th verſe, "Be ſtrong in the "Lord, and in the power of his might: put "on the whole armour of God, that ye may "be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the de-"vil." And further, it deſerves our particular attention, that theſe exhortations are often enforced with motives taken from the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel: as, for inſtance, in the 15th chapter of the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, the apoſtle, after a moſt ſublime and animating deſcription of the glory of the reſurrection-ſtate, concludes with a pathetic exhortation to immoveable firmneſs in every good work: "Therefore (ſays he) be "ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, always abounding "in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye "know that your labour is not in vain in "the Lord."

But, not to reſt the vindication of our holy religion from the imputation of a mean and ſlaviſh ſpirit, merely on the precepts of it, or on the example of its great Author and his firſt followers, let it be obſerved, in the *third* place, That the unfeigned belief, and ſincere practice, of the Chriſtian religion, has an

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obvious and manifeſt tendency to inſpire ſuch zeal and courage as will diſpoſe men to act with reſolution and firmneſs in every worthy cauſe. This will appear very evidently, if we attend to the two following particulars: *1ſt*, That Chriſtianity is the beſt preſervative from all thoſe things which damp the vigour of the mind, and enervate its active powers; and, *2dly*, That it ſupplies the moſt powerful incitements to act every worthy part in life, in the firmeſt and moſt vigorous manner.

Now, there are three things which chiefly check the vigour of the mind, and render it timid and irreſolute; and theſe are, conſciouſneſs of mean and guilty conduct, unmanly habits of indulgence in effeminate pleaſures, and a prevailing melancholy of temper.

It is not ſurely neceſſary to ſpend time in ſhowing, that the firſt of theſe, conſciouſneſs of baſe and unworthy behaviour, is an intimidating and diſpiriting thing. Every one knows, that guilt is, in its own nature, the ſource of ſelf-condemnation, and of dread of deſerved puniſhment; that it naturally fills the countenance with ſhame, and the heart with terror; and that, when the mind is under the influence of theſe enfeebling paſſions, it muſt be timid and dejected, and incapable either of forming, or of executing, any manly and worthy deſign. It is likewiſe obvious to every one, that thoſe who have imbibed the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, will be preſerved from thoſe preſumptuous ſins which ſtrike ter-

ror into the conſcience; and that they will have ſuch truſt in the promiſes of the goſpel for the pardon of their involuntary failings, as will eſtabliſh them in peace of mind, and in the humble hope of the favour and acceptance of God. In this peaceful ſtate of mind, they will be in full poſſeſſion of their active powers, and ready to exert them whenever and where-ever duty calls. The experience of all ages verifies the obſervation of Solomon, "That the wicked flee when no man purſueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion;" Prov. xxviii. 1.

Again, That unmanly habits of indulgence in pleaſure ſoften and enervate mens minds, and make them flee from every ſcene where labour and fatigue, where activity or boldneſs, are required, has ever been admitted as a certain truth, to which daily experience, and the hiſtory of all ages, bear teſtimony. But that all irregular indulgence in pleaſure is utterly inconſiſtent with the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, is abundantly evident from the whole tenor of the New Teſtament. It commands us to be lovers of God more than lovers of pleaſure; and to ſet our affections on the things above, and not on the things on the earth. It every where enjoins moderation and temperance, and forbids in the moſt particular and in the moſt awful manner, all exceſſes in worldly pleaſures of every kind. The Apoſtle, towards the beginning of the ſecond chapter of this epiſtle, exhorts Timothy in the moſt earneſt

neſt manner, "to be ſtrong in the grace "which is in Chriſt Jeſus, and to endure "hardſhip as a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt." The examples too which our holy religion ſets before us, are further proofs of the ſtanding oppoſition betwixt the ſpirit of Chriſtianity and every kind of mean and unmanly indulgence: "I keep under my body, and bring "it into ſubjection," ſays the Apoſtle, "leſt "that, by any means, when I have preached "to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away;" 1 Cor. ix. 27.

And, *laſtly*, Every one's own experience aſſures him, that nothing deadens the active powers of the mind more effectually, than a melancholy caſt of temper: for, when this diſpoſition becomes prevalent, it renders men timid and apprehenſive to ſuch a degree as unfits them for the ordinary affairs of life, and much more for encountering the difficulties and dangers of any great or hazardous undertaking. It muſt be owned, that when this gloomy diſpoſition becomes a diſeaſe ſettled in the conſtitution, it is perhaps altogether incurable. But, ſo far as principles of reaſon, juſt ſentiments, and comfortable views, can have any power to give relief, the religion of Jeſus is the moſt effectual remedy. The doctrines of the goſpel are admirably adapted to eſtabliſh the heart in peace and joy. The views which it gives us of the perfections and government of God in general, of the ſcheme of redemption in particular, of this

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ſtate as introductory to a better one, and of the diſtreſſes of life, "as bringing forth the "peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs, and work-"ing for us a far more exceeding and eternal "weight of glory," are like rays of light breaking through a thick gloom, to chear and gladden the diſconſolate ſoul. When the real Chriſtian contemplates the honourable relations in which he ſtands to his God and his Saviour; and when, with a mixture of faith and humility, he looks forward to his eternal honours in the kingdom of heaven, he is inſpired with an elevation and gladneſs of heart, which diſſipates gloomy thoughts, and fits him for the worthieſt and moſt vigorous exerciſe of his active powers. This joyous temper was very prevalent among the firſt Chriſtians: "Believing, they rejoiced with joy un-"ſpeakable and full of glory;" 1 Pet. i. 8. "Being juſtified by faith, they had peace with "God, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and "rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God. "And not only ſo, but they gloried in tribu-"lation;" Rom. v. 1. 2. 3. Thus it appears, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is the beſt ſecurity againſt thoſe things which are the chief obſtructions to the exertion of our powers with chearfulneſs and vigour to the beſt purpoſes of life and ſociety.

But the ſpirit of Chriſtianity not only delivers the human mind from thoſe things which benumb its active powers, and bereave it of its reſolution and fortitude; but (as was propoſed

poſed to be ſhown in the *ſecond* place) it alſo ſupplies the moſt powerful incitements that can be conceived, to act every worthy and honourable part in life, however difficult or dangerous, in the moſt vigorous and undaunted manner.

In order to illuſtrate and confirm this point, let us attend to the principles and motives by which Chriſtians ought to be animated in the courſe of their lives and actions.

Here it is manifeſt, that whoever has imbibed the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, will have the warmeſt and ſtrongeſt ſenſe of the excellence of all the virtues of the Chriſtian life, and the beſt affections to God and man. It will ſurely be admitted, that all the virtues comprehended in the apoſtolical ſummary of Chriſtian morality, "Whatſoever things are true, "whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever "things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, "whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever "things are of good report," are the objects of ſupreme affection, and habitual and delightful meditation, to every true Chriſtian. All who are juſtly intitled to this character, contemplate theſe Chriſtian virtues in a variety of lights; which cannot fail to animate, to elevate, and fortify their minds in a very remarkable manner. They always conceive of them as ſupremely excellent in their own nature, as agreeable to the all-perfect will of God, and as of indiſpenſable and eternal obligation. They always live and act under the

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fulleſt and moſt delightful perſuaſion, that the exerciſe of theſe heavenly virtues not only conſtitutes the chief perfection, happineſs, and glory of human nature, but alſo forms it into a reſemblance of the divine nature itſelf; and from this perſuaſion of the ſupreme dignity and excellence of theſe virtues, ardent deſires immediately ſpring up, to be poſſeſſed of them to the higheſt degree that the nature and ſituation of mankind in this world are capable of: and theſe deſires again immediately excite reſolutions of practiſing them with unvariable conſtancy, and of cultivating them with the utmoſt ardour and aſſiduity.

Now, every one who has attended to the finer and nobler workings of the human heart, when purified by the grace of God, muſt be convinced, that a warm love of that moral excellence which is the chief glory of the divine nature itſelf, earneſt breathings after nearer approaches to the perfection of it, a lively ſenſe of duty, a full conviction that the doing that duty is the will of God, and ſtrong impulſes of the friendly and public affections, are, without all doubt, the moſt powerful and commanding principles in the human breaſt; and when they unite their force, and operate with all their ſtrength, nothing can withſtand them. When we attend to what paſſes in life, we ſee the moſt convincing proofs of this: for whenever a mind, under the influence of theſe great principles, has its views fixed upon ſome great or good

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end, in the proſecution of which, oppoſition, difficulty, or danger, is foreſeen, holy Chriſtian reſolution exerts itſelf with its whole ſtrength; and indeed it becomes in a manner invincible, ſo that hardly any difficulty or danger can ſtand before it. And we may eaſily conceive how it ſhould be ſo, when we reflect upon the illuſtrious and mighty ſupports which it receives from the exerciſes of Chriſtian faith and piety. The full aſſurance of divine approbation and aid, muſt ever inſpire the ſoul with confidence and alacrity in acting that part which truth and integrity require. It is impoſſible, even in imagination, to conceive any thing better calculated for emboldening the human mind, and ſupporting its moſt determined reſolutions, than the firm perſuaſion that the divine adminiſtration is ever on the ſide of righteouſneſs, and that the righteous man ſhall be moſt amply and glorioufly rewarded for whatever he may have ſuffered for his adherence to it. "When he "looks forward, and reflects upon his digni-"ty as one of the ſons of God; and that it "doth not yet appear what he ſhall be, and "that when his Saviour appears, he ſhall "appear with him in glory," he is not only encouraged to perſevere in his virtuous courſe, but he feels himſelf inſpired with a noble ambition to maintain a character ſuitable to ſuch an exalted relation, and ſuch glorious hopes. Under the full influence of theſe animating views, all the clamour and evil ſpeaking, all

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the reproaches and unjuſt cenſures of the world, and even all the dangers that may threaten, will not diſcourage him, or make him deſiſt and give way. "He will wait patiently upon God, will commit his way to "him," and triumph in the certain proſpect, "that God will bring forth his righteouſneſs "as the light, and his judgement as the "noon-day;" Pſ. xxxvii. 5. 6. Being conſcious of his honeſt endeavours to do his duty, though amidſt many weakneſſes and infirmities, he ſolaces himſelf with the modeſt, but triumphant hope, through the mercy of God in Jeſus Chriſt, that all his good intentions, all his ſecret acts of goodneſs, all his ſilent ſufferings and ſtruggles, and all his ſervices, are recorded, and ſhall be one day publiſhed, honoured, and rewarded, on the grandeſt of all theatres, before an aſſembled world. Theſe hopes chear and gladden, and, at the ſame time, ſtrengthen his heart, in the hour of danger, in the day of diſtreſs, and in the proſecution of every virtuous deſign. He has a firm reliance on the promiſes of the goſpel, that he ſhall be enabled to do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening him; and that at laſt he ſhall be a conqueror, and "more than "a conqueror," Rom. viii. 37.; and invited to "ſit down with Jeſus on his throne, even as "he alſo overcame, and is ſet down with the "Father on his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

Now, it will certainly be acknowledged, that "thoſe noble principles of action," ſupported

ported with " thoſe glorious motives," (which have both juſt now been deſcribed), are the fitteſt that can be conceived to inſpire ſuch a ſerene and ſteady fortitude, as will encounter every difficulty and danger, and even death itſelf, in the moſt undaunted manner. It is extremely obvious, that when the minds of Chriſtians are under the real dominion of theſe great principles of their religion, they are prepared to put in practice that magnanimous leſſon of their great Maſter, " not to " fear them that can kill the body, and after " that have no more they can do; but to " fear him, who, after he hath killed the " body, hath power to caſt both body and " ſoul into hell-fire." And where-ever this ſuperiority to the fear of man, and the fear of temporal evils and dangers, flows from the principles of the goſpel, it will be accompanied with a noble freedom and independence of ſoul, that can never dwell with mean and ſlaviſh principles. Men, though in the loweſt ſtation of life, who have a juſt ſenſe of the dignity of human nature, and of thoſe Chriſtian virtues which dignify it, will diſcover, on proper occaſions, a ſtrength and greatneſs of mind, which will make them diſdain every thing that approaches in any degree to meanneſs, cowardice, or ſlaviſh fear. To all which we may add, as ſufficiently clear without a particular illuſtration, that a courage derived from theſe principles and motives which have been deſcribed, will be more ra-

tional and vigorous, more firm and permanent, than that which flows merely from animal ſpirits, from external accidents, from the love of glory, or from what the world calls a ſenſe of honour.

Some perhaps will object to all that has been ſaid, That ſuperſtitious notions of religion, and a fancied approbation of the Deity, will excite ſome men to perpetrate the very worſt and vileſt actions, in as firm and undaunted a manner as the beſt Chriſtians can perform the worthieſt and nobleſt. To this it may be anſwered, That it muſt be owned, that when the minds of men are under the influence of falſe opinions, which they conceive to be countenanced by Heaven, they will be daring and intrepid to an amazing degree. But ſurely falſe perſuaſions ſometimes producing very great effects, is no proof that juſt principles will not produce equal or ſuperior ones, more certainly and more uniformly. Beſides, to a diſcerning eye, there are marks which diſtinguiſh thoſe acts of magnanimity and courage which are inſpired by the principles of true religion, from thoſe which proceed from the deluſions of ſuperſtition. The former are calm and ſerene; the latter are fierce and turbulent. The firſt kind are modeſt and unaffected; the ſecond are vain and oſtentatious. The one ſort, ſpringing from an enlightened underſtanding and a pure heart, leave behind them a true peace of mind, which can never be extinguiſhed or diminiſhed;

miniſhed; but the other ſort, proceeding from an underſtanding darkened by ſuperſtition or corrupt paſſions, leave behind them only an ill-grounded and deluſive ſatisfaction, which the firſt glimpſe of truth muſt diſſipate and deſtroy.

Others, perhaps, will object to what has been ſaid, That the tendency of Chriſtianity is only to form men to a kind of paſſive courage, or patience under ſufferings; but that it has no tendency to form them to that active courage which diſtinguiſhes the hero from the confeſſor. Let it ſuffice to anſwer to this objection, That that unremitting zeal and activity which prompted the Apoſtle Paul, for inſtance, to ſpend thirty years in journeys by land, voyages by ſea, amidſt numberleſs difficulties, dangers, and ſufferings, to propagate Chriſtianity, would have operated in the ſame manner, and excited to like indefatigable labours and efforts, if Providence had called him to defend his country, to ſupport the rights and privileges of mankind, or to proſecute any other worthy undertaking. It ſeems natural to conceive, that a magnanimity and activity of mind, which were manifeſted in ſuch an uniform and conſpicuous manner through the whole of the Apoſtle's life, in promoting one great cauſe, would have diſplayed themſelves in a ſimilar way, if he had been engaged in any other important cauſe, which reaſon, religion, and the

good of mankind, would juſtify and recommend.

Your time will not permit me to ſhow, as a further anſwer to the objection, That all the finer principles and affections of the human mind impel to action in the moſt ſpontaneous manner, and even in face of oppoſition and danger of the moſt formidable kind; that the goſpel ſtrengthens theſe natural principles, and encourages the moſt active efforts in every worthy cauſe; and that it is only when ſufferings for a good cauſe cannot be avoided by righteous means, that the ſpirit of the goſpel manifeſts itſelf in "perfect works "of patience."

Upon the whole, from the view which hath been given of the principles and precepts of Chriſtianity, and of the ſpirit of its great founder, we may conclude, that it is a *ſpirit of power, and not of fear*. And, indeed, we may ſafely challenge the brighteſt genius, in ancient or modern times, to invent a ſyſtem of principles which ſhall be more adapted to inſpire magnanimity and courage of the moſt exalted kind. And if it is impoſſible to deviſe any ſcheme which ſhall excel Chriſtianity in this reſpect, all the accuſations of it, as encouraging a mean and daſtardly ſpirit, as promoting ſlaviſh principles of any kind, ſhould be contemned, as altogether falſe and groundleſs.

The power of prejudice, in giving the moſt unnatural turn to the plaineſt things, is very ſurpriſing.

ſurpriſing. The author quoted in the beginning of this diſcourſe, in the ſame chapter which is there referred to, alledges, that the true Chriſtian's faith of another world, and a better life, extinguiſhes all concern in him for this preſent world, and this preſent life; or, at leaſt, that it renders him incapable of any brave and courageous efforts to preſerve or promote any advantages that relate only to ſuch a tranſitory ſtate. But he has given no reaſon that can convince any unprejudiced perſon, that a Chriſtian, though of the moſt elevated and heavenly turn of mind, muſt have a leſs warm and delicate ſenſe of the liberties, or of any of the juſt privileges, of mankind, or muſt have leſs zeal for the intereſts of his country, his family, or friends, merely on the account of his lively hopes of another and better life beyond the grave. Beſides, when we reflect, that a main part of the duty of a Chriſtian, according to the principles of his religion, lies in doing good, in promoting the happineſs of others to the utmoſt of his power, it is not eaſy to conceive how his firm hopes of immortality ſhould render him indifferent to his duty, and incapable of all vigorous and manly efforts to diſcharge it. It ſeems to be a more natural concluſion, that the firm hopes of a future glorious life would animate the real Chriſtian to diſcharge his duty with the utmoſt faithfulneſs; and particularly, would diſpoſe him to labour, with the utmoſt vigour, to do good to his brethren of mankind,

though it ſhould be at the expence of a tranſient and uncertain life, that is ſoon to be ſucceeded by a permanent and eternal one. That is certainly the doctrine of the goſpel; which declares, in the moſt expreſs manner, "That Chriſtians ought to lay down their "lives for the brethren;" 1 John, iii. 16. Such authors as throw out theſe and the like unjuſt reflections upon the Chriſtian religion, are either totally unacquainted with its native purity and excellence, as it lies in the New Teſtament, or they are greatly deficient in that fairneſs and candour of mind which ought to be a primary qualification in thoſe who aſſume to themſelves the office of inſtructors of the world at large.

Again, we may further infer from the view which has been given of the principles of action recommended by the goſpel, that thoſe who profeſs themſelves admirers of magnanimity, bravery, and that high order of virtues, ought to be conſiſtent with themſelves, and admire Chriſtianity, which affords the beſt ſupports and the fineſt examples of them. And if they would wiſh not merely to admire theſe ſhining virtues in ſpeculation, but to practiſe them in real life, let them lay open their minds to the full influence of the ſpirit of the goſpel. Thoſe clear views of duty, and thoſe ſtriking and glorious motives to the practice of it, which the goſpel ſets before them, are the moſt effectual means of forming

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their minds to a firmneſs and fortitude of the moſt excellent kind.

To conclude: Let all of us be careful to nouriſh our ſouls with the ſpirit of the goſpel; ſo that, deriving ſtrength and vigour from it, we may, on all occaſions, exert true fortitude in reſiſting every thing that is evil, and cleaving to every thing that is good. Let us be ever on our guard to withſtand, in the moſt determined manner, every impulſe of ungoverned paſſion, every temptation to a departure from that equity of diſpoſition, that benignity of temper, that purity of heart, and that integrity of life, which becomes the deſciples of the holy Jeſus; and, particularly, let us arm ourſelves with manly reſolution, to deſpiſe that ſcorn and ridicule which the vicious and unprincipled take a pleaſure in employing to ſeduce the unguarded and unexperienced into the ſnares of vice, or into a neglect and contempt of all religion.

We ought always to remember, that though we are not called to the national ſenate, to ſhew our reſolution and firmneſs in oppoſing public meaſures which we conceive hurtful to the ſtate, nor into the field of battle to ſignalize our bravery, nor to the ſcaffold of martyrdom to prove our conſtancy and fortitude; there are abundance of other opportunities in the daily intercourſes of ſociety, and ordinary train of life, for the moſt important exertions of courage and manhood. Private and ordinary life is the field of battle where every

every Chriſtian is called to exerciſe his courage "in fighting the good fight of faith." It is here we muſt learn to conquer ourſelves, and to eſtabliſh an empire in our own boſoms, over every mean, every ſenſual, every ſelfiſh, and every worldly paſſion. The victories gained here, though concealed from the eyes of men, may be more ſignal and glorious in the ſight of God, than thoſe that are gained in the moſt conſpicuous and moſt admired ſcenes of public life. The maxim of Solomon, "That he that ruleth his own ſpi-"rit, is mightier than he that taketh a city," is a fundamental maxim of all ſound philoſophy, as well as of Chriſtian morality. The conqueſt over bad propenſities, inclinations, and habits, is the firſt ſtep of the Chriſtian life; and when this is obtained, the nobler principles of the heart will operate with eaſe and freedom, and diſplay their power through the various ſcenes of life, in the ſtedfaſt proſecution of every thing virtuous and praiſeworthy.

Before I proceed to the *ſecond* aſſertion in the text, permit me to ſuggeſt, that it particularly becomes thoſe who are aſſociated for the noble purpoſe of propagating Chriſtian knowledge, to exert themſelves with vigour in that honourable and important work. They ought to ſuffer nothing to diſconcert or diſcourage them, but to animate one another from the encouraging conſideration in the text, That God hath not given Chriſtians the

ſpirit

ſpirit of fear, but of power, and ſuffer nothing to diſconcert or diſcourage them; they may reſt fully aſſured, that the ſpirit of that religion which it is the end of their aſſociation to promote, is the power of "God unto "ſalvation to every one that believeth."

Our Saviour himſelf has plainly intimated, that the goſpel is the great mean which the wiſdom of Providence has choſen to enlighten, to ſanctify, to bleſs, and to ſave mankind. "No man," ſays he, "knoweth the "Father ſave the Son, and he to whomſoever "the Son will reveal him" At another time, he declares, in like manner, "That "no man cometh to the Father, but by him." And, on other occaſions, he aſſumes to himſelf the glorious character and office of being "the light of the world." The hiſtory of the world for near eighteen hundred years, confirms the truth of theſe declarations: for, in ſo far as any juſt and worthy ideas of God, of Providence, of a future ſtate, and of pure morality, are yet to be found among the nations of the world, they are derived from the goſpel of the Son of God. Even Mahometan countries are no exception to this; for whatever is good and pure in that religion, is manifeſtly borrowed from the ſacred writings of the Jews and Chriſtians. Now, from what is paſt, and from the predictions of ſcripture about what is to come, we have reaſon to think, that the ſame divine religion ſhall be the chief mean henceforward of ſpreading

theſe

theſe bleſſed doctrines, till the knowledge of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt his Son, cover the face of the whole earth. Government and laws, philoſophy and arts, may give their aid; but the ſpirit of Chriſtianity muſt be the inſpirer and conductor of all other means of civilization and improvement. No ſtronger incitement ſurely can be given to a ſociety which have choſen for the object of their aſſociation the propagation of the religion of Jeſus, than this, That they are co-operating with the grand ſcheme of Providence, laid before the foundation of the world, "to turn "men from darkneſs unto light, and from "the ſervice of ſin and Satan, to the ſervice "of the living God."

The ſucceſs which this noble undertaking hath already had, and which appears to the conviction of every one, from the number of ſchools, no leſs than 172, which are ſupported by it, and in which 7270 ſcholars are inſtructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, muſt prove a new and powerful excitement to the Society itſelf to perſevere with zeal and alacrity in their *labours of love*.

Beſides theſe ſchools for acquiring neceſſary knowledge, there are twelve ſchools on a ſecond patent, in which girls are taught and trained up to induſtry in ſuch kinds of work as are ſuited to their ſex, and the condition of life for which they are deſigned. It may ſurely be expected, that the view of theſe bleſſed effects which this worthy inſtitution

has

has already produced, and is daily producing, will excite and encourage all the true friends of religion and humanity, to contribute, every way in their power, to the ſupport and advancement of a deſign ſo manifeſtly calculated to promote both the temporal good of ſociety, and the eternal intereſts of immortal ſouls.

SER-

SERMON XVI.

The Subject continued.

By WILLIAM LEECHMAN, D. D.

2 TIM. i. 7.

For God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind.

I Now proceed to conſider the SECOND ingredient of the Chriſtian ſpirit, mentioned in the text, viz. the ſpirit of love.

As love, in the New Teſtament, when ſpoken of in general, uſually ſignifies the love of our brethren, we ſhall, in what follows, principally treat of it in this ſenſe: *firſt*, By ſhewing, that love, tenderneſs, and humanity, is moſt certainly the genius of Chriſtianity; and, *ſecond*, By endeavouring to point out the excellency of this ſpirit, in the degree and to the extent in which the goſpel deſcribes and enjoins it.

Now, the *firſt* of theſe, That the genius of Chriſtianity is love, ſurely needs no long or laboured proof to a Chriſtian audience. The primary doctrines of this religion are, That God

God is love, and dwells in love: — That the whole ſyſtem of his government is kind and benign: — That the ſcheme of redemption took its riſe from the original benignity and mercy of the great Father of all: — That the great Redeemer was animated with the ſame ſpirit of benignity and compaſſion, in undertaking, and in executing every ſtep of it: — And that the conſummation of this glorious plan will be the total deliverance of many myriads of the human race from ſin and death, and their final eſtabliſhment in a ſtate of perfect virtue and of immortal felicity and glory. It cannot be conteſted, that theſe doctrines favour and encourage the ſpirit of kindneſs and beneficence.

And when we attend to the preceptive and ſentimental parts of the goſpel, we find, that the ſpirit of love breathes in all of them. That the precepts of Chriſtianity tend to reſtrain and ſuppreſs all the malevolent paſſions, and to promote the culture and improvement of the kind and friendly ones, can admit of no doubt: That Chriſtian morality ſtrikes at the root of that ſelfiſh and worldly temper which ſtands in direct oppoſition to the ſpirit of love, is evident from the whole ſtrain of the doctrine of its great Author and his apoſtles, as well as from the ſhining examples they have given of generoſity and diſintereſtedneſs in their own lives.

Further, That the religion of Jeſus not only aims at ſuppreſſing and extinguiſhing the

ſelfiſh and worldly ſpirit, and the whole malignant tribe of paſſions which ſpring from it, but tends to cheriſh and invigorate all the benign and friendly diſpoſitions, is evident, beyond all doubt, from the moſt curſory view of the New Teſtament. To mention all the particulars on this ſubject, would be to tranſcribe a great part of the morality of the goſpel. Let it ſuffice to ſelect a few paſſages. "By this," ſays our Saviour, "all men ſhall "know that ye are my diſciples, if ye love "one another." And, in another paſſage, he inſiſts upon a forgiving temper, as indiſpenſably neceſſary in order to our acceptance with God: Matth. vi. 14. "For if ye for-"give men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly "Father will alſo forgive you: but if ye "forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither "will your heavenly Father forgive you." How perfectly he exemplified this ſublime precept in the courſe of his own life, and at the concluſion of it, is well known to every one who has read the goſpel-hiſtory. The apoſtles of our Lord inculcate the ſame kind of precepts with the greateſt warmth and earneſtneſs: Eph. iv. 31. 32. "Let all bitterneſs, "wrath, anger, clamour, and evil-ſpeaking, "be put away from among you, with all "malice; and be ye kind one to another, "tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even "as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath forgiven you."

Further, The points of light in which Chriſtianity places our fellow-men, are ſuch as are ſuited

ſuited to affect us in the moſt powerful and tender manner. — We are all, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, equally the children of the ſame great family, and equally under the protection, and at the diſpoſal, of the Almighty and All-wiſe Providence of the ſame great Parent of all. We are all fellow-travellers through this ſtate of pilgrimage, in which we are all expoſed to the like wants, dangers, and diſtreſſes. We have all the like imperfections and infirmities, equally liable to fail in our duty to one another, and therefore equally ſtanding in need of forgiveneſs at one another's hands. — We are all equally labouring in the ſame ſtate of darkneſs and corruption, of guilt and mortality: And we are all equally dependent for our hopes of deliverance from theſe great evils, on the ſame great friend and ſaviour of the human race, Jeſus the Son of God.

Theſe views of our brethren of mankind are certainly fitted to bring down the moſt lofty looks, and to convince the proudeſt of the ſons of men, that, notwithſtanding all the diſtinctions and pre-eminences on which they value themſelves, they are, in reality, on a level, in the moſt important reſpects, with the pooreſt and loweſt of the human race. — And all thoſe who lay open their hearts to the full influence of ſuch views, will feel ſuch humane and tender ſentiments ariſe within them, as the ancient Eaſtern author expreſſes in the following pathetic words: "If I did deſpiſe

" the cauſe of my man-ſervant, or maid-ſer-
" vant, when they contended with me; what
" then ſhall I do when God riſeth up? and
" when he viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer? Did
" not he that made me in the womb make
" him? and did not one faſhion us in the
" womb?" Job, xxxi. 13. 14. 15.

It is our great happineſs in the Chriſtian world, that the ſacred writings abound with ſuch ſublime precepts, and ſuch tender ſentiments, as have been mentioned. But let us take care, leſt, through our familiarity with them, we loſe the juſt ſenſe of their excellence and importance. Let us always remember, that, whatever our notions about theſe precepts and ſentiments of the goſpel may be, they are ſurely divine inſtructions, and worthy to ſerve for leſſons to the whole race of mankind: they are leſſons that bear the moſt ſtriking characters of that tenderneſs of heart, that elevation of mind, that total ſuperiority to all ſelfiſh and worldly paſſions, which diſtinguiſhed the divine Author of our religion; and they are the moſt convincing proofs, that humanity and love, in the higheſt perfection, is the genius of Chriſtianity.

As was propoſed, in the *ſecond* place, let us allow our thoughts to dwell a little on the excellencies of the ſpirit of love. Firſt, then, love is the moſt amiable and the moſt beautiful of all objects of contemplation. Goodneſs, genuine goodneſs, where-ever it appears, charms the heart of man. The native indi-

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cations of it in the features, the looks, the tone of the voice, or geſtures of the body, ſtrike every beholder with pleaſure. The beauty, eſpecially, of kind and humane, of charitable and generous deeds, has ever been felt and acknowledged by all mankind. In a word, all the various emanations of a kind and benign heart, in looks, in voice, in words, in attitudes, or actions, are pleaſing to the view of every obſerver. And hence it is, that the ſpirit of love, operating and diſplaying itſelf in the characters and manners of mankind, gives them their chief beauty and excellence. Where this is wanting, that artificial politeneſs which is in ſo high eſtimation among the higher ranks of mankind, gives an apparent, rather than a real, grace and amiableneſs to their manners. That politeneſs which flows from real affection and humility will ever be found to be the moſt genuine. It may, indeed, want ſome of the exterior graces which ariſe from elegant attitudes and motions of the body, or from certain proprieties of voice and language: but as the eſſential part of politeneſs conſiſts in attending to thoſe things which may pleaſe or be agreeable as far as is conſiſtent with truth and integrity, in avoiding either in words or in actions what may hurt or offend, and in laying aſide frivolous officiouſneſs and ſtudied formality, unfeigned good-will and affection will engage to a more uniform and ef-

fectual practice of these things than any artificial rules and habits can possibly do.

It must indeed be owned, that, considering how ill affected men are frequently to one another, they would be insupportable to each other without a portion of that dissimulation which is a considerable ingredient in the fashionable politeness of the world. If men were to shew, without disguise, that envy or contempt, that aversion or malice, which, alas! they too frequently have in their hearts, they could not possibly bear with one another. It serves, indeed, to maintain the peace and decency of society, that they mutually act a part, though far from the most sincere one. But, surely, if men would, in good earnest, apply themselves to the exercise of that mutual love which Christianity enjoins, there would be little occasion for that habitual insincerity in artificial professions of good-will and humility, which make up so great a part of what is called good manners or good breeding. If love without dissimulation really warmed our hearts, it would beautify our manners more effectually than all artificial rules without it can possibly do.

Further, in the second place, the excellency of the principle of love will appear, if we consider, that it is not only a most amiable, but also a most powerful one. And indeed its power is so great, that it is difficult to enumerate or describe all its mighty effects. It is an established maxim, That love begets love; and

and the truth of this maxim is verified by univerſal experience. If we ſhow hearty good-will and affection to thoſe with whom we converſe, or with whom we have any intercourſe, we can ſcarce fail to receive the proper returns of good-will and kind diſpoſitions on their part. Love without diſſimulation conquers every heart. Its empire is in a manner univerſal. Where it is known to be the ruling principle of any character, it will gain the hearts and applauſes of thouſands, nay of millions of mankind, who never ſaw the perſon, nor were ever within the reach of his beneficence. But the mighty power of love appears, not only in winning the hearts of all men, when there is no reſiſtance to be overcome ariſing from envy, reſentment, or any of the malevolent paſſions; but it appears more conſpicuouſly in triumphing over ill-will, reſentment, and malice of the moſt confirmed and inveterate kind: "For if we real-"ly, and from the bottom of our hearts, "love our enemies, (as our Saviour di-"rects); if we bleſs them that curſe us; if "we do good to them that hate us; and if "we pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us "and perſecute us; we will gradually ſoften "and melt their hearts." If we uniformly perſevere in returning good for evil, the beſt offices for the worſt, there is ſcarce any human creature ſo hardened and obſtinate as not to be mollified, and even reconciled, at laſt. There is only one exception to this:

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When the good man's measures of conduct and course of action continue to oppose and thwart the worldly interests, and ambitious views, of his adversaries; in that case, the most steady exercise of the purest and most perfect goodness will have no effect. This was the state of things betwixt our blessed Saviour and the rulers of the Jewish nation, and was the cause that his inimitable and unconquerable goodness had no influence upon them. But when this is not the case, an uniform course of kindness and good offices, which carry demonstration along with them, that there are no remains of resentment at bottom, or no other wrong principle operating within, will sooner or later produce their effect, and beget love and esteem.

We may further add, as another proof of the mighty power of love, that when any one is called to the delicate and difficult office of admonishing and reproving others for their follies and vices, nothing but the workings of real affection appearing to the full conviction of the guilty person himself, can reconcile his mind to the reprover, and give real energy and efficacy to what he says. The power of love, in such cases, far surpasses the power of the finest eloquence. When love manifestly dictates the reproof, it will draw tears from the eyes of the profligate and abandoned, and even of the hardened in vice and profligacy, and make him conceive a higher degree of affection and esteem for

for the friendly adviſer than ever he had before; and ſometimes the ſucceſsful execution of an office of this kind, proves the commencement of a friendſhip that laſts through life.

We may ſtill add upon this head, that it is love which inſpires the ſoul with generous and noble deſigns, and with that reſolution and fortitude which is neceſſary to execute them. Thoſe heroic actions which are recorded in hiſtory, and which we read with admiration, have, for the moſt part, been the effects of the love of one's country, of particular friendſhip, or of an ardent zeal for ſome important intereſts of mankind. Thus heroiſm, the trueſt heroiſm, derives its chief excellence and ſtrength from the ſpirit of love.

Laſtly, The mighty power of love diſplays itſelf in uniting and binding mankind together. A renowned leader in ſcience or in arts, a ſuperior of diſtinguiſhed virtues and talents in any important department in ſociety, produces a wonderful union and harmony among his admirers and adherents. The warm attachment, for inſtance, of all ſoldiers to a favourite general, or of all the ſubjects to a beloved prince, what good-will, what unanimity of views, does it produce among the ſoldiers or ſubjects? How does it make them forget their little animoſities, and interfering intereſts, and join heart and hand in the ſervice of him who is the common object of their affection? In a word, love is that

inviſible,

inviſible, but mighty chain, which links mankind together in a thouſand ways. And it is by theſe aſſociations that their perſonal intereſts, and the intereſt of the public, are frequently promoted in the moſt effectual way.

To all which we may add, that this principle of love ſhall at laſt demonſtrate the whole extent of its power, by uniting the whole virtuous and holy part of mankind into one happy and glorious ſociety, under the one great Mediator and Head Jeſus Chriſt the righteous. And as he is the perfect image of the inviſible God, it ſhall, through him, unite them all to the great Parent of the univerſe. And thus love ſhall be the eternal and indiſſolvable bond of union to the whole immortal empire of Jehovah.

The *third* and *laſt* proof of the excellency of the ſpirit of love, is its being the ſource of joy and happineſs. This is a point that needs no laboured illuſtration or proof. We need only appeal to every one's feeling, that love is the temper, nay the very eſſence of happineſs. Every ſentiment of the human breaſt, in ſo far as it partakes of benignity, it is happineſs; and in ſo far as it partakes of malignity, it is miſery. If we had our choice in the manner of making ourſelves happy, we could not fix upon any thing more effectual, than to have our hearts overflowing with the warmeſt affection to every human creature, without the leaſt tincture of any malevolent or diſquieting paſſions. The only thing further

ther wanting to complete our happineſs, would be the aſſurance of the favour of God, to ſecure and perpetuate it. Let us ſuppoſe this attained, and then try, if we can even imagine a more happy ſtate than that of a man "who dwells in love," who is ſatisfied with his lot in life, and who rejoices in the divine adminiſtration. In ſuch a ſtate, ſurely, the mind muſt be open to reliſh, with the fulleſt pleaſure, all the enjoyments of life; and it muſt alſo be in the beſt diſpoſition to do good, and to relieve the neceſſities, to ſympathiſe with the ſorrows, and to ſhare in the joys, of all mankind.

Theſe are the natural and noble effects of the ſpirit of love: where-ever it prevails, it renders the poſſeſſors amiable, powerful, and happy.

To conclude: Let us not ſatisfy ourſelves with admiring and praiſing the excellency of this ſpirit; but let us be ſolicitous to tranſplant it into our hearts, and to exhibit the bleſſed effects of it in our lives. Let it ever be our aſſiduous care, to check the firſt riſings of all the malevolent paſſions, and to cheriſh the firſt motions of the benign affections. Let us habitually lift up our ſouls in earneſt prayers to Almighty God, that he may kindle in our hearts the ſacred flame of love to himſelf and to mankind, and that he may heighten and increaſe it by the continual influences of his Holy Spirit. In all the intercourſes of ſociety, let us embrace every opportunity

that

that offers, and even ſeek opportunities, of exerciſing our own friendly affections; and let us be equally careful to extinguiſh the beginnings of animoſity and hatred, and to ſpread love and friendſhip among all thoſe to whom our influence can any how reach: for if we ſet ourſelves in earneſt to do ſo, we may be aſſured the kind diſpoſitions will gather ſtrength, and will grow up till they gain the aſcendency in our ſouls. And under the dominion of thoſe gentle maſters, we ſhall be amiable in the eyes of men, we ſhall be acceptable in the ſight of God, we ſhall be happy in ourſelves, we ſhall be uſeful in the world; and at our departure hence, we ſhall be fit to be tranſlated into thoſe bliſſful regions of the new heaven, and of the new earth, where peace and harmony, love and friendſhip, ſhall have their everlaſting abode.

We now proceed to offer a few obſervations on the THIRD aſſertion in the text, viz. That Chriſtianity is the ſpirit of a ſound mind.

In entering upon this part of the ſubject, let it be obſerved, in order to prevent miſtakes, that two things ſeem principally to be comprehended under the notion of ſoundneſs of mind: *1ſt*, That the mind is ſettled in ſuch a ſtate of freedom from the perturbation and darkening influence of all irregular paſſions, that it is in a capacity to judge fairly and juſtly of things according to truth and nature;

nature; and, 2*dly*, That it can adhere with ſtedfaſtneſs to theſe right judgements, even in the moſt trying ſcenes of life. It will ſurely be admitted, that it is not the meaning of the aſſertion in the text, that Chriſtianity gives us better natural powers than we would have had without it; but only that it aſſiſts us in the free and genuine uſe of thoſe powers, in whatever degree we are poſſeſſed of them.

Now, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity has a natural tendency to preſerve ſoundneſs of mind, and to lead to wiſdom in the conduct of life, will appear from the following obſervations.

Firſt, That it is one principal end and intention of Chriſtianity, to eſtabliſh ſuch rational and ſolid principles of religion, as, if followed out, would prevent or correct all ſuch ſuperſtitious and enthuſiaſtic notions as tend to relax the obligations of morality, and to ſubſtitute ſomething elſe in their ſtead. The conceptions which the religion of Jeſus gives us of the nature and perfections of God, as a Spirit poſſeſſed of all moral excellencies, lead us to conceive, that the practice of thoſe moral virtues which makes us reſemble him, is abſolutely indiſpenſable. Our holy religion not only enjoins us, in general terms, "to be followers of God as dear children; "to be holy, as God is holy; perfect, as our "heavenly Father is perfect:" but it aſſures us in the moſt expreſs and ſolemn terms, that

the acceptance and favour of God cannot be obtained by rites and ceremonies, or any thing whatsoever, without holiness of heart and life. That "without holiness no man "shall see the Lord," is one of its fundamental principles; and it is solemnly declared to be the grand and ultimate end of the whole dispensation of the gospel, "to purify mens "hearts, and make them zealous for good "works." Our blessed Saviour stood forth, through his whole life, an undaunted champion for pure and undefiled religion, for the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith, in direct opposition to the superstitious, enthusiastic, and corrupt opinions of his bigotted countrymen; and it was in support of this glorious cause that he suffered even to the death. Whoever reads the gospels with any degree of attention, must be convinced, that he laboured, through his whole life, with the warmest and most indefatigable zeal, to root out all superstitious opinions of every kind, and to plant in their stead the grand principle of true religion, That there can be no acceptance with God, no evidence of a title to future felicity, without a life of good works proceeding from a good heart. Whoever, therefore, imagines, that Christianity encourages or promotes superstition, or substitutes any thing whatsoever instead of real holiness, must either be grosly ignorant of what it is, or must be prejudiced against it to an astonishing degree.

Now

Now it is extremely obvious, that if this one momentous and capital principle of our religion, "That without holineſs no man "ſhall ſee the Lord," were firmly eſtabliſhed in the minds of men, it would have a mighty influence on the whole ſyſtem of their opinions, and on the whole conduct of their lives. This ſingle principle operating with its full power, and to its whole extent, would root out multitudes of fooliſh, trifling, and pernicious opinions; it would correct innumerable weakneſſes and follies; and would be a chief mean of ſtrengthening and perfecting human reaſon itſelf. The effects of it on life would be no leſs ſignal: it would fix men at once in a right choice as to the great ends of life, and as to the means of accompliſhing them; no ends could be propoſed, or means employed, but ſuch as the ſtricteſt virtue, and pureſt religion, would approve and recommend. The ſpirit of the goſpel is therefore favourable, in a very remarkable manner, to ſoundneſs of mind, and wiſdom of conduct.

Again, let it be obſerved, in the *ſecond* place, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity has a powerful tendency to mortify and ſubdue all thoſe irregular paſſions which prove the chief hindrances to the beſt exerciſe of our rational powers.

Every one who has given the leaſt attention to human life, muſt have obſerved, that the taſte for the affluence and riches, for the

power and dignity, and for the ſplendid accommodations and elegancies of life, riſes frequently to ſuch an immoderate height, that it makes men loſe ſight of the true dignity of human nature, and engages them in the purſuit of theſe periſhing objects, with as great ardor as if the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of them conſtituted their chief happineſs and glory. That vehement paſſions of this kind darken mens underſtandings, enfeeble their moral ſentiments, and lead them to form a thouſand falſe judgements and wrong eſtimates concerning the real worth of things, is abundantly evident from daily experience and obſervation. And when theſe worldly paſſions gain an aſcendency in the minds of ſuch men as are at the ſame time under the full dominion of ſelf-love, of pride and ambition, they not only diſturb and blind their underſtandings; but, if they happen to meet with unexpected and ſevere diſappointments and mortifications, they ſometimes riſe to ſuch a height of violence, as terminates in total diſtraction and madneſs in all its moſt frightful forms.

The ſpirit of Chriſtianity is the moſt natural and effectual remedy againſt the exceſſes of all ſuch paſſions: for it is manifeſtly the deſign of this divine inſtitution, to raiſe the minds of men to a ſtrong and commanding ſenſe of the excellence of virtue in itſelf, and to a lively faith of the glorious rewards awaiting it in a future ſtate. It is a fundamental maxim of the morality of the goſpel, That the

the chief happineſs and chief glory of human nature lies in the virtuous endowments and diſpoſitions of the heart, and not in worldly poſſeſſions or enjoyments of any kind. Whoever therefore has imbibed the ſpirit of this religion, will have his ſupreme affections ſet on the things which are above, on ſpiritual and eternal objects; the effect of which muſt neceſſarily be, that the love of inferior and earthly objects will abate, and ceaſe to maintain the empire in his ſoul: "We cannot "ſerve two maſters: we cannot ſerve God "and Mammon." In ſo far, therefore, as men are really under the influence of Chriſtian principles, thoſe irregular paſſions which darken their underſtandings, which weaken their moral powers, and incapacitate them for forming right judgements with regard to the true ends and true happineſs of life, will be ſubdued and mortified. And when the obſtructions from theſe paſſions are removed, the nobler faculties of the mind will exert themſelves with vigour, and govern the life according to the dictates of truth and wiſdom.

Theſe happy effects of the ſpirit of the goſpel, in keeping all the paſſions within ſuch bounds as not to ſtop or diſturb the proper exerciſe of the finer powers, may have been of unſpeakable benefit to the human race in former ages, and may continue to be ſo, till the conſummation of all things. The minds of thouſands may have been eſtabliſhed in ſuch a ſtate of moderation and ſelf-govern-

ment, as has prevented their paſſions from riſing to ſuch hurtful or ſuch fatal exceſſes, as their natural degree of ſtrength might have occaſioned, if they had not been mellowed and ſubdued by the ſacred and powerful influence of the goſpel: and if the ſpirit of Chriſtianity ſhould more and more prevail, as there is good ground to hope, theſe bleſſed effects will alſo more and more increaſe. At the ſame time it is to be feared, that many perſons in Chriſtian countries make ſo little improvement of their ſpiritual advantages, that they ſuffer their pride, their ambition, their revenge, and worldly luſts, to hurry them on to the ſame heights of madneſs, as if they had never heard of the Chriſtian religion. When, indeed, that moſt deplorable ſtate of human nature, total phrenzy, takes its riſe from ſome ſtrange diſorders in the animal frame, without any aid from ungovernable paſſions, Chriſtianity can have no influence to prevent or cure it, at leaſt, in any other way than as it enjoins us, "to mortify "the fleſh, to bring the body under, and keep "it in ſubjection."

It was obſerved above, that ſtrong ſelf-love and pride have a great influence in raiſing the worldly paſſions to an immoderate height. It is worthy of particular attention, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity interpoſes its friendly aid here alſo, by forming men to ſober and lowly thoughts of themſelves. The maxims and precepts of the goſpel ſhow ſufficiently, that humility

humility is an important and eſſential part of the Chriſtian diſpoſition. Thus the apoſtle exhorts, Rom. xii. 13. "I ſay unto every man "that is among you, not to think of himſelf "more highly than he ought to think, but "to think ſoberly." This ſobriety of mind, though perhaps it cannot be reckoned a diſtinct virtue from all others, yet it is a diſtinguiſhing part of a right ſtate of mind, and is the beſt ground-work on which the ſuperſtructure of a virtuous character can be raiſed. Mark the perſon that is void of this ſober ſenſe of himſelf, and you muſt be very undiſcerning in characters, if you do not perceive in him many foibles at leaſt, if not many vices. The chief ingredients of this ſobriety of mind are theſe two, humility, and equity of diſpoſition.

Thoſe who retain an habitual ſenſe of their conſtant dependence on divine Providence, of their utter inſufficiency for their own happineſs, of their manifold imperfections, and of their accountableneſs to God for their whole behaviour, cannot be high-minded. Such perſons will not diſcover a propenſity to compare themſelves only with thoſe who are their inferiors in natural powers, acquired accompliſhments, and moral attainments, that they may feed their vanity with their own real or fancied ſuperiority. They will rather be diſpoſed to compare themſelves with thoſe who are their ſuperiors in all theſe reſpects; and, not even ſatisfied with this, they will chuſe to meaſure

meaſure their attainments by that ſtandard of moral perfection which is planted in their own boſoms, and which is clearly diſplayed in the purity and perfection of the divine law. Theſe comparative views will ſoon make them ſenſible how little cauſe they have for indulging themſelves in vain, ſelf-complacent, and ſelf-important imaginations. On the contrary, theſe ſober views of things will inſpire them with ſentiments of genuine humility: inſtead of entertaining ſelf-magnifying thoughts, they will feel pious regret upon the account of their being ſtill ſo far ſhort of the ſtandard of moral excellence, and they will feel the deepeſt ſorrow when they reflect on thoſe manifold failings and infirmities of which they are ſtill conſcious; and, under theſe humbling views, they will earneſtly implore the mercy and forgiveneſs of God in Jeſus Chriſt, through whom they hope to receive the atonement.

It muſt be obvious to every one on the leaſt reflection, that the humble ſtate of mind juſt now deſcribed, will be a perpetual reſtraint on thoſe boilings of reſentment, thoſe pangs of pride and ambition, and thoſe florid imaginations about worldly happineſs, which ſtrangely blind the underſtanding, and occaſion the groſſeſt departures from rational judgements and wiſe conduct. Again, equity and fairneſs of mind is alſo a great ſecurity againſt wrong judgements and wrong conduct in the affairs of life. Obſerve a man under the dominion of ſelf-love, ſelf-will, and ſelf-

intereſt,

intereſt, and you will ſee him form judgements ſo manifeſtly and reproachfully partial as muſt aſtoniſh every impartial ſpectator. On the other hand, obſerve a man of a fair and equitable diſpoſition, and you ſhall ſee him give judgement with readineſs and alacrity againſt his own intereſt, when juſtice or equity requires it. In the language of ſacred writ, "He ſweareth to his own hurt, and changeth "not." That humility and equity are fundamental virtues in the Chriſtian ſcheme of morality, will not be called in queſtion. The ſpirit of Chriſtianity, therefore, muſt be acknowledged to be conducive, in a remarkable manner, to ſoundneſs of mind, and to improvement in real wiſdom.

We ſhall only add, in the *third* place, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity produces a pleaſing compoſure and ſerenity of ſoul, which has the moſt friendly influence on the beſt exerciſe of our rational faculties.

The real Chriſtian is not only delivered from the tumult of impetuous paſſions, but he is ſolaced with proſpects and hopes of the moſt comfortable and peaceful kind. In this ſtate of tranquillity and peace, he has the full command of all his faculties, and can exerciſe them to the beſt purpoſes, and in the beſt manner. Every one's own experience aſſures him, that whatever diſturbs his mind, darkens and enfeebles it; and, on the contrary, whatever compoſes his mind, brightens and invigorates it. Every one's obſervation, either

on

on himself or others, also informs him, that deliberate forethought, sound judgements, and wise purposes, cannot dwell amidst hurry and confusion; and that they are only to be found in the habitations of order, quietness, and peace. As the eye, in a serene and unclouded sky, sees every object within its reach in the most distinct manner; so the mind sees every thing clearly when it is free from the perturbations of passion, and the disquietudes of care and anxiety. Thus it appears, that the spirit of Christianity is conducive, in a variety of ways, to soundness of mind, and wisdom of conduct.

What an admirable thing, then, is the religion of Jesus, which, while it "makes us "wise unto salvation," makes us also wise as to this world, so far as our natural faculties are capable!

All that has been said of the excellency of the spirit of the gospel, has been confined to the three ingredients of it mentioned in the text. But if we were to display the gospel-morality in its full extent, as comprehending piety, purity, equity, humility, and the whole train of Christian virtues, many new and striking excellencies would rise up to our view. And if we were to add to the divine morality of the gospel, a delineation of its peculiar doctrines, and of their excellence, and suitableness to the wants and exigencies of mankind in their present state, we would clear-

ly diſcern, that it was juſtly proclaimed by the angel at our Saviour's birth, to be "glad ti- "dings of great joy which ſhall be to all "people."

If we were, for inſtance, to ſhew, that the goſpel is light to thoſe who were ſitting in darkneſs; that it is pardon to the guilty; that it is the power of the Spirit of God to purify and ſanctify thoſe who groan under corruption and a body of ſin; and that it gives the aſſured proſpect of an immortal life in a glorious reſurrection-ſtate to thoſe who, through fear of death, would be all their life ſubject to bondage: I ſay, if we were to paint Chriſtianity in theſe intereſting lights, we would clearly ſee, that it is, in all reſpects, "worthy of "all acceptation;" and that it is the only ſource of conſolation to the heart of man, that can never fail him in any circumſtances or ſituation of life, or at the approaches of death and diſſolution itſelf.

To which we may ſtill add, that if we were to compare the goſpel, both as to its doctrines and as to its morals, with the moſt admired ſchemes of ancient Heathen moraliſts, its ſuperior excellence, in both reſpects, would appear in the moſt convincing light. But as there is not room for treating theſe important topics in one diſcourſe, we ſhall conclude with a few brief reflections on what hath been ſaid.

1. FIRST, then, if the goſpel has a manifeſt tendency

tendency to form men to the moſt amiable, the moſt excellent, and moſt uſeful diſpoſitions, it muſt be total inattention, want of diſcernment, or want of taſte for excellence even of the higheſt order, that can make any one inſenſible of its worth and excellence. To which we may add, that thoſe who employ their time and talents to depretiate this excellent and uſeful inſtitution, and to bring it into contempt, cannot be deemed true friends to mankind, and to the moſt important intereſts of human ſociety.

2. If the goſpel is really ſo excellent and ſo uſeful, as has been ſaid, let us beware of entertaining prejudices againſt it. Let none deceive themſelves with an opinion, that prejudices are harmleſs and innocent, or, at leaſt, that they cannot be criminal in any conſiderable degree. Let none imagine, that that liberty of thinking, which is the unalienable right of mankind, intitles them to think and to believe as they pleaſe, and whatever they pleaſe. On the contrary, every one of us ought to reflect, with the utmoſt ſerioufneſs, on the ſacred obligations we are under, to exerciſe our underſtandings impartially in the ſearch of truth, and to judge according to the evidence which God hath laid before us. It is true, that we are not accountable to any human juriſdiction for our thoughts, and the uſe and improvement we make of our underſtandings. But, at the ſame time, it is equally true, that we are as really accountable to

God

God for our ways of thinking, as for our ways of acting. There will be a mighty difference found at the divine tribunal, betwixt liberty of thinking and licentiouſneſs of thinking, betwixt judgements formed from the juſt exerciſe of our rational powers, and thoſe which have been formed under the influence of worldly and ſelfiſh paſſions. Nothing can be more equitable, than that thoſe who, through corrupt paſſions, have ſhut their eyes againſt the light which would have directed their ſteps, comforted their hearts, and led them in the path of life, ſhould ſuffer all the conſequences of their own willful conduct. He who is the truth hath aſſured us, that it ſhall be the ground and cauſe of the condemnation of many, "that they have loved "darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their "deeds have been evil."

To conclude: Let us make the various excellencies of the ſpirit of the goſpel the frequent and favourite ſubject of our moſt retired and ſerious meditation; and in theſe hours of retirement, let us lay our hearts fully open to thoſe impreſſions which the contemplation of its excellence will naturally make upon us. The minds of moſt men are ſuſceptible of impreſſions from moral excellence. And when we perceive, that a very high degree of it ſhines through the whole goſpel, we will be diſpoſed to hearken with fairneſs and impartiality to the many other ſtriking proofs of its truth and divinity. And

as our hearts are more and more ſmitten with the love of truth and virtue, prejudices will vaniſh, and our faith in the divine miſſion of Jeſus will be gradually confirmed, " till " we are filled with peace and joy in belie- " ving."

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